RACIAL AT-ONE-MENT AS PROPHETIC ACTIVISM
GROWING THE 'KINDOM' OF GOD
THROUGH CONCILIATION

Rodney James Lynch

BA, College of New Rochelle, 2010
MDiv, Drew Theological Seminary, 2014
STM, Drew Theological Seminary, 2015

Mentor

D. Anthony Everett, DMin

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT v

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS vi

DEDICATION ix

ABBREVIATIONS x

EPIGRAPH xi

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER

1. MINISTRY FOCUS 9
2. BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS 30
3. HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS 55
4. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS 80
5. INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS 109
6. PROJECT ANALYSIS 135

Introduction……...……...135

Methodology……..……..138

Implementation……...…….141

Weekly Session Overview.……..……144

Summary of Learning…….…….156

Conclusion…...……161

APPENDIX

A. EVENT INVITATION……164

B. INFORMED CONSENT FORM…….166

C. PRE-SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE……169

D. POST-SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE 171

BIBLIOGRAPHY 173

ABSTRACT

RACIAL AT-ONE-MENT AS PROPHETIC ACTIVISM
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by
Rodney James Lynch
United Theological Seminary, 2025

Mentor

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My context is the Greater Lafayette religious community in Indiana. The problem is that many Christian congregations are segregated with covert expressions of racism and biases. If pastors and members of the Greater Lafayette community, including Purdue University students, participate in the Racial Atonement process, then they will be equipped with an apparatus to begin addressing the racial and generational animus and segregation in that community. The methodology used was proactive research using interviews and pre- and post-questionnaires. The data gathered proved that this project was successful with participants committed to this unity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The racial and generational schism within many churches directs me to this doctoral thesis primary purpose: to bridge humanity, particularly the Christian community, across ethnic and generational lines through brave conversations and collaborations. To do this, I first must acknowledge God because this would not be possible without God's power and presence. Therefore, I present my body and Racial Atonement as a living sacrifice unto God as my reasonable service. I am also indebted to the living and resting ancestors – particularly the Dixons, Lynches, Lewises, and Williams – whose blood and spirit run through my veins.

To my sons, Jeremiah, David, and Michael, I do this work so that you can live in a better America. I pray you will continue this work beyond what I could ever imagine, And to their mom, Felicia, thank you for your prayers and support. To my siblings: Jermaine (Tad), Dewevae (Dewey), Lisa, Eric, Tracey, Deanna, Jurrita, and Jermaine, I am grateful that our bloodline connects us. To my aunts, uncles, and cousins, I would not be who I am without all of your love in my life. To my closet and dearest circle of friends (you know who you are). I started this educational journey with my peers, faculty, and staff at the College of New Rochelle, Rosa Parks Campus. Special thanks to Dr. Anthony Browne (Civil Rights Movement course) for introducing me to the father of Black Liberation Theology, James H. Cone. I am thankful to Dr. Cone for allowing me to take

his course “Martin and Malcolm: A Dream or a Nightmare” at Union Theological Seminary and for the time we spent outside the class hours.

I greatly appreciate the faculty, staff, and students who have been a part of my life at Drew Theological Seminary. Your support has helped me shape, express, and embrace my voice and the ministry of prophetic witness. You have made me feel not just valued, but also part of a larger family. A special thank you to my Drew Crew circle; you are more than just friends; you are my family, including Alma Tuitt. I also want to express my gratitude to Dr. Lynn Westfield for introducing us to scholars such as Jeremiah A. Wright, Charles H. Long, Iva Carruthers, and others in the course “God Talk with Black Thinkers.” And to Dr. Traci West for leading the Cross Cultural trip to Zimbabwe, an experience that was not just a trip but a spiritual awakening. Finally, I am appreciative to Dr. Kate Ott, Dr. Chris Boesel, Dr. Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, Dr. Angella M. Pak Son, Dr. Jesse Mann, Dr. Mark A. Miller, Dr. Kenneth Ngwa, Dr. Arthur Pressley, and Dr. Gary V. Simpson, for your continuous support and guidance.

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To my mentors and the congregations they serve: Rev. Dr. Craig Dunn (First Baptist Church Madison, New Jersey), Rev Dr. Arturo Lewis (Emmanuel Church Ridgewood, New Jersey), Rev. Dr. Jerry M. Carter Jr. (Calvary Baptist Church Morristown, New Jersey), and the Rev. Toby Sanders (Beloved Community Church

Trenton, New Jersey). Thank you for pouring yourselves into me through your Pastoral, Priestly, Preaching, and Prophetic leadership and example.

To the students I encountered while serving as pastor and director in campus ministry. You allowed me the time to study and helped me grow and stay connected generationally. Also, to Leonard Harris: a true friend. To Barbara Kerkhoff, who encourages me to keep doing racial and generational healing work. We started Racial Atonement together, and therefore, without your encouragement, I probably would have quit by now. A special thank you to all who participated in this project; I am forever grateful to you.

In closing, to the Hip-Hop community, especially the honorable Melissa B. DeBerry who God placed in my life at the perfect *kairos* time, thank you for pouring into me during this process financially, emotionally, and spiritually. When I am tired and need a break from everything, it is Hip-Hop that regenerates and refreshes me. To Oscar Hooks, rest in power! To my biological parents, Demerious Lynch-Hooks and Pastor James Williams, without the two of you, there would be no me; thank you for saying yes, for your prayers, support, wisdom, and for loving me unconditionally. To my grandmother, the late Great Lear Dixon Lynch, you are missed; I particularly thank you for demonstrating a life of faith, prayer, and love to me. I would not be in a relationship with the Lord had it not been for you. I Love You! Finally, to anyone I may have missed, thank you for all the prayers and continued support!

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Jehovah YAHWEH, Jesus the Christ, GOD, who came in a Body. I am empowered to do exceedingly abundantly above all I could ask or imagine because of you; to the living and sleeping ancestors whose spirits live through me, empowering me as well. And, to all who have prayed and supported me throughout my life, I am grateful, even though I do not know all your names.

Reverend Rodney Lynch

ABBREVIATIONS

AASS	American Anti-Slavery Society
AME	African American Episcopal
ATTC	Address to the Country
BIPOC	Black Indigenous People of Color
BLM	Black Lives Matter
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
DEI	Diversity Equity Inclusion
DRT	Diversity Round Table
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NCMA	National Campus Ministry Association
NJ	New Jersey
NM	Niagara Movement
PREP	Partnership Religion Education Prison
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
US	United States
USA	United States of America
URL	University Religious Leaders
WPC	Women's Political Council

There's a way out of this mess, and it requires each of us to begin with our own body. You and your body are important parts of the solution.

—Resmaa Menakem, "My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending of Our Bodies and Hearts"

INTRODUCTION

After twenty-plus years of adulthood and only achieving up to a twelfth-grade level of education, I decided to pursue higher education in my forties. Although I resisted doctoral theological education for a few years after earning my Master of Divinity degree, it was during the doctoral program at United Theological Seminary that I realized my *raison d'être* — reason for being. For the past several years, the ethnic and racial segregation amongst the American church, an ideal expressed by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. over sixty years ago, and the generational separation within many American churches, what I have witnessed has burdened and disturbed my heart, mind, body, and soul. Through the ebbs and flows of my personal life and this theological doctoral journey, under the tutelage of Reverend Doctor D. Anthony Everett and with the support of my colleagues in the Prophetic Activism: From the Cross to the Community cohort, I embraced the challenges and trusted the process to the end. Though I sometimes wanted to give up, I eventually enjoyed the journey with its frustrations, discomfort, difficulties, pains, joys, and exciting moments. This journey was informing, electrifying, and empowering.

"Racial Atonement," as Prophetic Activism birthed from my spiritual autobiography and contextual analysis, is a way to heal a historical crisis of the American universal and, dare I say, global church. "Racial Atonement" is also a clarion call to the church to heal the brokenness between racial (ethnic) and generational divisions, animus,

hostility, unhealthy anger, lack of respect, and resentment. By connecting churches across differences – theological, political, social, generational, and racial – "Racial Atonement" seeks dialogue and collaborations through the atonement process before any chance at racial reconciliation. Although I am not opposed to the attempt at racial reconciliation, I believe atonement must come first. How racism perpetuates itself in our society, socially and politically, is mainly, at its core, a spiritual issue. "Racial Atonement" challenges the ideology and idolatry of white supremacy/whiteness to repentance.

The process of atonement I propose was confirmed in a recent conversation with Rabbi Adam Bellows, a reformed Jewish brother. From their perspective, atonement comes from the five-step Jewish tradition of "Teshuvah" — seeking atonement. They are: 1) admission of wrong and understanding that it was wrong. 2) Feeling remorse, grief, mourning, and lamentation. 3) Stop doing the wrong, repent. 4) Outward or out loud confession, seeking forgiveness. 5) Repair the damage, economic repair.[1] Economic justice/repair is a form of restitution imperative to the process of "Racial Atonement."

Joseph Evans writes, "Many contemporary Christians have characterized Passover as personal atonement alone, but it is more: Passover is a justice motif. Yahweh requires human justice."[2] Thus a broader view of Passover discloses the organized presence of a human justice movement that enfleshes specific demands, which is economic reparations. It is Yahweh's presence manifested into economic restitution.

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[1] Adam Bellows, Rabbi at Temple Israel of West Lafayette, Indiana, shared the term "Teshuvah" process to atonement as part of his Jewish faith. This conversation took place on Zoom, Thursday, April 3, 2025.

[2] Joseph Evans and J. Alfred Smith, *Reconciliation and Reparation*: Preaching Economic Justice (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2018),92.

Passover is atonement, a covering of sins.[3] Yahweh is a God of justice who manifests himself as human justice through the human justice movement and thereafter in the awarding of economic reparations.[4]

The reconciliation conversations where I have been present are led through a whiteness thought that keeps white people and white-thinking people comfortable with superficial conversations and surface considerations. In addition, these conversations rarely, if at all, have an economic component to the healing process. I have yet to see where racial reconciliation is effective, and in South Africa, the reconciliation process is through "Truth" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission), not "racial" reconciliation. A pathway for healing the racial divide in South Africa started with truth telling, and the process of Racial Atonement must start with the truth about America's historical and present treatment of Black and Brown bodies. In his book *Called to Reconciliation: How the Church Can Model Justice, Diversity, and Inclusion*, Jonathan Augustine states, "after the evil institution of apartheid came to an end in South Africa, Archbishop Desmond Tutu was appointed to lead the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, . . . whose job it was to face the truth of South Africa's past."[5]

Augustine continues, as he quotes from the book, *No Future without Forgiveness*, by Desmond Tutu, "the commission's chief goal was restorative justice . . ."the central concern is the healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken

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[3] Evans and Smith, *Reconciliation and Reparation,* 92.

[4] Evans and Smith, *Reconciliation and Reparation*, 92-93.

[5] Jonathan C. Augustine, William H. Willimon, and Michael B. Curry, *Called to Reconciliation: How the Church Can Model Justice, Diversity, and Inclusion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022), 15.

relationships."[6] And, by working from a restorative justice lens, "a seeking to rehabilitate both the victim and the perpetrator, who should be given the opportunity to be reintegrated into the community he has injured by his offense."[7] For Racial Atonement to have any lasting effect in the United States and globally, we have to tell the truth in multiethnic/cultural and multigenerational settings.

This thesis and the ensuing project are entitled "Racial Atonement as Prophetic Activism: Growing the Kin-Dom of God Through Conciliation." Another essential term in this thesis is the theology of Kin-dom/Kinship of God. "The term kin-dom originated from Mujerista (Hispanic feminist) theologian and ethicist Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, who proposed it as a way to interpret or translate the Greek word *basileia* (kingdom) to emphasize relationality rather than a strict hierarchy."[8] Isasi-Diaz states, "To understand the kin-dom of God, one has to examine the meaning and importance of family."[9] Bridgett Green states, "Kindom is intended to reflect a modern understanding of God's activity in and through Christian communities, connoting inclusion, care, mutual support, solidarity, and unity in an ethic that calls us to treat one another as family."[10] Therefore, like Diaz, and Green, I view kin-dom from a family lens, as such we are a symbiotic

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[6] Augustine et al, *Called to Reconciliation*, 15.

[7] Augustine et al, *Called to Reconciliation*, 15.

[8] Melanie Johnson DeBaufre, "Email conversation," Henry Anson Buttz Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity, Drew School of Theology, Madison, NJ: April 7, 2025.

[9] Benjamin Valentine, *In Our Own Voices: Latino/a Renditions of Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 79.

[10] Bridgett Green, "On 'Kingdom' and 'Kindom': The Promise and the Peril," *Insights: The Faculty Journal of Austin Seminary* 37, no. 1 (Fall 2021): 3-10.

people, interdependent, and intrinsically connected, biological or not by the breath of God.

The other critical term for the process of atonement is "conciliation." According to Graeme Higgs, "Effective conciliation requires a de-escalation of conflict."[11] Higgs gives three important steps to the conciliation process: 1) Allow parties to let their feelings out. 2) Reduce the client's defensiveness by developing rapport. 3) Ask each client, independently, what they want.[12] The practice of conciliation for this thesis is through narrative theory which you will read about in my Interdisciplinary Foundations chapter of this document.

Through lots of personal prayers, the prayers of my ancestors, family members, and friends, the educational, political, social journey, and holding on to the promises of God, this thesis and project were born. This extensive thesis and project are detailed in the following chapters.

Chapter one, Ministry Focus, speaks to three areas primarily. First, it overviews my life's journey and faith walk. My life's journey that at times felt like a trip. It was a journey where I tripped and fell into substance abuse; however, the road to recovery was when my ministry journey began. In this chapter, I share my childhood and upbringing, educational development, profession, and the journey that led me to my calling in ministry. It also delves into my unwavering devotion to God, a driving force behind my quest for justice for humanity and the road to this thesis.

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[11] Graeme Higgs, "The Principles and Practice of Conciliation," *Conciliation Courts Review* 24, no. 2 (December 1986): 47.

[12] Higgs, "The Principles and Practice of Conciliation," 48.

Chapter two, Biblical Foundations, is the cornerstone of this thesis. The text, Micah 6:1-8, conveys God's complaint against God's people. This text was chosen for its clear expression of God's disappointment and displeasure with God's people for the sin of separation that led to an unjust society. Similarly, I believe God is deeply troubled by the segregation and separation within churches. Therefore, the role of atonement is not just important, but urgent in our quest to be anti-segregationist and anti-separation.

Chapter three, Historical Foundations, examines two movements that sought racial equality and equity from the mid-eighteen to the early nineteen hundreds: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Niagara Movement (the precursor to the NAACP), and Marcus Garvey's Pan-African Movement, University Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). These organizations sought racial justice through an economic and educational lens with little to no long-term effect. In addition, Booker T. Washington's debate with Du Bios is referenced.

Chapter four, Theological Foundations, underscores God's unwavering role in liberating the most marginalized people. The focus is mainly on the liberation of Black American bodies. God has a history of calling and sending individuals to play a role in their liberation and the liberation of others. In fact, Black liberation theology was already enacted before James Cone put it in writing. Cone states, "Black theology is not something I invented; it derived from nearly 400 years of Black struggle for dignity and justice."[13] Therefore, in this chapter, I explored the tradition of resistance to oppression through the works of freedom fighters, liberationists, and abolitionists. I also highlight the historical and generational power epigenetically we carry in our Black and Brown

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[13] James H, Cone, *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 12018), 116,

bodies from God and our living and sleeping ancestors. In addition, I explore kin-dom theology in more detail.

Chapter five, Interdisciplinary Foundations, centers on narrative theory and its importance in transforming communities. I have witnessed storytelling as a healing mechanism amongst multiethnic and multigenerational populations. I passionately advocate for the revival of the oral and aural storytelling tradition, a unifying force that brings people together across their differences. When diverse groups gather, learning about one another, learning from each other, and meeting one another right where they live, it allows for conciliation and dismantling barriers that separate them.

Chapter six, Project Analysis, gives an overview of the seven-week sessions the project executed to test its hypothesis. "This project hypothesizes that if pastors and members of the Greater Lafayette community, including Purdue University students, participate in the Racial Atonement process, they will be equipped with an apparatus to begin addressing the racial and generational animus and segregation in that community." The project started with fourteen participants who were represented by four generations. Despite scheduling changes, the project ended with eight participants, but four generations were still represented. Three data points were used to test and evaluate the change in their understanding of crucial terms involved in the Racial Atonement process.

These were pre- and post-questionnaires, focus group discussions, and reflection journaling. Through this research project, I witnessed ethnic and generations gather respectfully and engage in difficult conversations about racial healing through an atonement lens. In addition, their understanding, and lack thereof, of familiar biblical terms was revealed to me. Each participant's new understanding was also well received.

They realized that the biblical concepts that were familiar to them needed some more thought from and in a diverse context, a realization that reassured us of **for** the success of "Racial Atonement."

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

I would have never imagined, not even in my wildest dreams or most intimate time with God, that I would be writing about the urgent need for "Racial Atonement" (at-one-ment) through the lens of racial conciliation, not "Racial Reconciliation." This long life journey of mine feels like I have been on a quest to understand the divine relationship to humanity, mainly through the lens of the social construct of race in America. I could have never imagined that in my early childhood years when my family and I encountered racist police. I could have never imagined that as a tri-captain of my high school basketball team, my life was almost choked out of me by this large, over-powering white male police officer during a basketball game. I never thought that the years my late great dear maternal grandmother made me go to Sunday school and church service every Sunday morning would be the foundation to lead me to seek "Racial Atonement."

I am a son of Shiloh AME Zion Church of Englewood, New Jersey. Unbeknownst to me, at the time, Shiloh was nurturing me spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and socially. I remember being a youth usher every second Sunday of the month, where we had to wear black slacks and a white collar shirt. I was also a youth choir member who sang every third Sunday of the month. Although I dreaded getting up early on Sunday mornings, sometimes at 6:00 am, to get the papers delivered to the

community before heading to Sunday school, I looked forward to seeing my cousins, friends, and this one girl I had a major crush on.

I grew up in a predominantly African American community; however, I also spent a couple of years living in Fort Lee, New Jersey, a primarily white community at the time. In both communities, I was bullied in school by the white kids in Fort Lee, New Jersey, and by the Black kids in Englewood, New Jersey. Since then, I have always had a soft spot in my heart for the treatment of humanity. I hated seeing youth getting picked on or jumped on by a group of other youths. I felt powerless because there was nothing I could do about it to help the young male or female from being harmed. As I grew older, I found myself being a follower of my older male cousins, who were street-savvy and could fight. The more I would hang around them, the more confident I was in myself. They taught me how to defend myself, and ultimately, I began to not put up with being bullied. In addition, they also taught me how to do drugs, drink alcohol, and how to rap (sweet talk) to women. Eventually, I realized how detrimental an overuse of drugs and alcohol was to the value of my own life.

Therefore, after a few years of treatment, I reestablished myself in the church and enrolled in school. Within ten years, I received three degrees: a Bachelor of Arts in Social Science, a Master of Divinity, and a Master of Sacred Theology. My educational journey led me to ministry in West Lafayette, Indiana, a predominantly white community, where I served as pastor and executive director of the Baptist Student Foundation at Purdue University for seven years. Furthermore, I am very much involved in the community where there is a vast schism racially, ethnically, and culturally. In both communities, people are very tribal and silo themselves away from people that are different.

Consequently, I believe it's my responsibility as a faith leader to lead the charge in bringing racial, ethnic, and cultural groups together for "Racial Atonement" through the lens of conciliation.

Context

The context in which I am doing ministry is multiplicity. I serve in many ways as a community faith leader within the Greater Lafayette community, which consists of Lafayette, West Lafayette, where Purdue University resides, and Tippecanoe County, where all three municipalities or communities reside. As for Purdue, students can choose ten colleges within the University. The College of Agriculture, College of Education, College of Engineering, College of Health & Human Sciences, College of Liberal Arts, Mitchell E. Daniels Jr. School of Management, College of Pharmacy, Polytechnic Institute, College of Science, and the College of Veterinary Medicine. Purdue Diversity and Inclusion Department speaks a lot about the importance of having greater diversity among faculty, staff, and students. However, their words and practices have yet to be aligned; later in this paper, I will share the numbers to prove my point and the importance of the need for multiethnic, interracial, multicultural, and intergenerational atonement.

The racial demographical breakdown is overwhelmingly white, from administration to faculty and staff to the student body. To explain, I will use the racial demographic language of Purdue University. According to the data digest of Purdue University, amongst faculty and staff (2019 – Current), the racial demographic analysis is as follows; “16,512 total, Black 530, Hispanic 917, Asian 3,061, American Indian 197,

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander eleven, Two or More Races 546, Unknown 777, and White 10,473."[1] An overwhelming number of white bodies in authority.

As of 2021, the headcount is "37,101 undergraduate students, 11,613 graduate students, and 925 professional degree students (Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine and Doctorate of Pharmacy)."[2] The racial breakdown is as follows; "White 23,136 undergraduates, 4,711 graduates, and 530 are seeking a professional degree."[3] "International 4,166 undergraduates, 4,760 graduates, and 30 are pursuing a professional degree."[4] "Hispanic/Latino 2,314 undergraduates, 614 graduates, and forty are pursuing a professional degree."[5] "Asian 4,385 undergraduates, 702 graduates, and 109 are pursuing a professional degree."[6] "Black or African American 926 undergraduates, 377 graduates, and forty-eight are pursuing a professional degree."[7] "Unknown 495 undergraduates, 184 graduates, and 138 students are pursuing a professional degree."[8] "Two or More Races

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[1] University of Purdue, "Data Digest: Faculty and Staff Percentages, 2019-Current," last modified June 2021, https://www.purdue.edu/datadigest/.

[2] University of Purdue, "Data Digest: Student Enrollment Percentages, 2019-Current," last modified June 2021, https://www.purdue.edu/datadigest/.

[3] University of Purdue, "Data Digest: White Percentages, 2019-Current," last modified June 2021, https://www.purdue.edu/datadigest/.

[4] University of Purdue, "Data Digest: International Percentages, 2019-Current," last modified June 2021, https://www.purdue.edu/datadigest/.

[5] University of Purdue, "Data Digest: Hispanic & Latino Percentages, 2019-Current," last modified June 2021, https://www.purdue.edu/datadigest/.

[6] University of Purdue, "Data Digest: Asian Percentages, 2021, 2019-Current," last modified June 2021, https://www.purdue.edu/datadigest/.

[7] University of Purdue, "Data Digest: Black & African American Percentages, 2019-Current," last modified June 2021, https://www.purdue.edu/datadigest/.

[8] University of Purdue, "Data Digest: Unknown Percentages, 2019-Current," last modified June 2021, https://www.purdue.edu/datadigest/.

1,619 undergraduates, 230 graduates, and twenty-five are pursuing a professional degree."[9] "American Indian or Alaska Native thirty-seven undergraduates, twenty-nine graduates, and two students seek a professional degree."[10] "Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander twenty-three undergraduates, six graduates, and one student is seeking a professional degree."[11]

Notice that the total Black or African American population is around 3%; I would argue that at least 1.5% are athletes, if not more. Purdue does not seem to have much of a problem recruiting Black or African American female or male bodies to run up and down the football field or basketball court, around the baseball diamond, a track, up and down a soccer field, or hit a volleyball over the net. Furthermore, 3% of the entire Black or African American population has not changed in thirty years. In addition, amongst white and International graduate students, the population is almost the same; forty-nine students separate the two groups. Also, notice that the Asian population is separate from the international students.

Purdue prides itself on being one of the top educational institutions for International student enrollment. Over 100 countries are represented as International students for fall 2021 enrollment. "Purdue has more than 9,000 international students from nearly 130 countries – giving us the 4th largest population of international students among public universities; 9,303 students from abroad, representing about 127 countries,

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[9] University of Purdue, "Data Digest: 2 or More Races Percentages, 2019-Current," last modified June 2021, https://www.purdue.edu/datadigest/.

[10] University of Purdue, "Data Digest: American Indian and Alaskan Native Percentages, 2019-Current," last modified June 2021, https://www.purdue.edu/datadigest/.

[11] University of Purdue, "Data Digest: Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Percentages, 2019-Current," last modified June 2021, https://www.purdue.edu/datadigest/.

895 international faculty and staff representing 62 nations."[12] These dynamics are complex for most students, particularly white students who have never been around this much diversity their entire lives. In addition, many students of color must adjust to the sea of whiteness and its culture. Despite the wide range of demographics, students are very tribal; most seem to gather in silos for comfort. Therefore, as a spiritual leader, I must create space for interracial/intercultural and intergenerational dialogues amongst this diverse student, faculty population, and the Lafayette community.

Students attend Purdue from all across the world. I have engaged in conversations with them from many countries in Africa, such as Zimbabwe, Ghana, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Kenya, Libya, and Egypt, to name a few. The largest populations of international students are from the Continent of Asia; however, most are from China. Incorporate America, the more diversity in the company, the more economic growth. For this reason, I must be a minister who provides an opportunity for intellectual and social development and cultural diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence enlightenment. Along with the demographic descriptions comes a specific level of challenges for white and International students who have never been led by, taught by, or had a spiritual leader who is African American. Students have visited the ministry numerous times and spoke with me, and I would never see them again.

The demographic breakdown of the City of West Lafayette is a reflection of Purdue. "White 33,032 – 68.04%, Asian 11,344 – 23.37%, Black or African American 1,789 – 3.68%, Two or More Races 1,551 – 3.19%, Some Other Race 465 – 0.96%,

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[12] Deba Dutta, **"**Diversity Roundtable: Diversity & Inclusion at Purdue" (West Lafayette, IN: March 2, 2017).

American Indian and Alaska Native 304 – 0.63%, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander 66 – 0.14%."[13] Based on the numbers, the race population in West Lafayette and at Purdue University are overwhelming White. This causes significant challenges for Black Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC). Students have routinely shared some of their egregious experiences within the broader Tippecanoe County community with me.

Ministry Journey

A considerable part of my ministry journey and shaping of my prophetic witness was my encounters with systemic racism through the lens of policing as a child. When I was approximately six or seven, my family and I returned home one Sunday night from visiting an aunt in Englewood, New Jersey. On this particular Sunday evening, while returning home, my stepfather parked the car when suddenly, a police officer walked to the driver's side and asked my stepfather to roll down his window. The officer then asked, "Did you see a Black man snatch a White woman's purse tonight?" My stepfather responded, "How do you know he was Black?" The officer responded by saying, "White people don't do things like that." Afterward, we went into our apartment. My family and I never discussed the incident any further. That was my first encounter with a racist police officer, but not my last.

My worst experience in high school was an episode during a basketball game. I suffered physical, psychological, and emotional pain and trauma at the hands of a police officer. In 1983, as a senior in high school, I was a 5'10, 150-pound point guard and

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[13] West Lafayette Population by Race, 2021, https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/west-lafayette-in-population.

defensive stopper on the basketball team. I did not expect to be a victim of police verbal abuse and brutality. One night, the confrontation occurred when our team played Wood-Ridge High School in New Jersey, a predominantly white high school. Their team was all white, and one of their players made a derogatory remark to me as he passed the ball inbounds to one of his teammates. In disbelief, I asked him, “What did you say?” He then swung at me, and the fight ensued. Within a few seconds, I felt a massive arm grab and wrap around my neck from behind in a chokehold. This person lifted me off my feet and carried me to the athletic director's office while holding me in this chokehold the entire time. I could barely breathe. All I could hear was a female voice crying out, “Let him go; you're going to choke him to death!”

I later found out that voice was coming from my best friend's mother, who was pleading with the officer to release me so I could breathe. After finally being aggressively seated in a chair, a very muscular, broad white police officer walked from behind and stood in front of me. By the grace of God, he did not choke the life out of me. To this day, the trauma of that tragedy still looms in my body, mind, spirit, and soul. Therefore, every time I see or think about the life of Mr. Eric Garner, I hear him repeatedly say, “I can’t breathe,” and see the image of the cop with his knee on the neck of Mr. George Floyd and hear Mr. Floyd cry, “I can’t breathe,” the trauma of my experience with law enforcement resurfaces.

In addition to my early life experiences, my higher educational journey also significantly impacted my ministry journey. It all started at The College of New Rochelle, School of New Resources, Rosa Parks campus on 125th Street in Harlem, New York. In my first class, I was introduced to a wide range of scholars who were none

European: Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire, Hermann Hesse, who wrote the novel Siddhartha, which taught me Buddhism through a different lens, A Different Mirror; Ronald Takaki, and The Autobiography of Malcolm X as Told to Alex Haley. These scholars were essential to me educationally because, oddly, they were contiguous. One of the most influential classes I took as an undergraduate was the Civil Rights Movement with Dr. Anthony Browne.

Although this class was an introductory course to the Civil Rights Movement, I started embracing and shaping my ministry through a prophetic lens. For the first time, I learned about the First Reconstruction during the postbellum period of 1865 to 1877, where Black Senators like Hiram Revels and Blanche K. Bruce were elected to office. I had no idea of the significance of the Amendments to the United States Constitution that were supposed to give African Americans their full constitutional freedoms after the Civil War – the 13th Amendment of 1865, that abolished slavery and involuntary servitude; the14th Amendment of 1868, that gave previously enslaved African Americans due citizenship, equal protection, and civil rights; and the 15th Amendment of 1870, that gave African American men enfranchisement rights, or the right to play a role in the American democracy through voting.

When the First Reconstruction error ended, one hundred-plus years of White terrorism on Black bodies, known as the Jim Crow era, followed. I was introduced to or re-introduced to the prominence of organizations such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), led by Ella Baker, and how valuable women and young people, as young as middle school age, were to the Civil Rights Movement. I thought the whole movement was centered on the Southern Christian Leadership

Conference (SCLC). However, I learned from Dr. Browne the movement was very inclusive of gender and race from its beginning, as demonstrated by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the Congress of Racial Equality (C.O.R.E.). One of the most influential civil and human rights freedom fighters, and one of my favorite she-roes I was introduced to, was Ida B. Wells Barnett, who put her life on the line as she went on an anti-lynching crusade and put data in journalism. Lynching occurred, whether it was the terror of White mobs murdering Black bodies or the covert medical procedures performed on Black girls and women sterilized against their will, the practice of eugenics. Then, my introduction to the most dangerous threat to white supremacist ideas and practices, liberation theology, particularly Black Liberation Theology, founded by Dr. James H. Cone. I explored liberation theology even more at Drew University Theological School, allowing me to study with Dr. Cone to learn more about his work.

The Martin and Malcolm, A Dream or A Nightmare class with Dr. Cone taught me much about Black leadership and how non-monolithic we are and are just as effective. As my prophetic witness and identity were being shaped and groomed, I began to have, accept, and value voice. I always felt that my voice did not matter throughout my entire life. I suffered from low self-esteem, which made me think I was not smart enough and did not belong. However, all of my seminary professors and undergraduate professors challenged, stretched, and liberated me from that oppressive, submissive, and docile state of mind, spirit, and soul. At Drew Theological School, I was first introduced to feminism and womanism. Womanist theologian, Delores S. William's rejection of redemptive suffering, stretched me and allowed me to rethink Westernized Christianity,

(steeped in a white supremacist ideology), and its idea of redemptive suffering. My understanding of William's rejection of redemptive suffering is that, too often, Black women have had to bear the burden of too much suffering. But, for what or whose redemption is this necessary? In addition to Womanist theology through the lens of Delores Williams, I was also captivated by the prophetic witness, preaching, and ministry of Rev. Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr.

God Talk with Black Thinkers, where I first met and was taught by Dr. Wright and the late Dr. Charles H. Long, a professor of religious studies (University of Chicago). Dr. Wright's book, A Sankofa Moment: The History of Trinity United Church of Christ, where Dr. Wright is Pastor Emeritus in Chicago, Illinois, revealed to me how a pastor can be successful at the fivefold ministry described in the book of Ephesians 4:11-12; "He himself granted that some are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."[14] Dr. Wright was a great demonstration of embracing all five ministries. Dr. Charles H. Long's book, Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion, is one of the most influential books in religion. Furthermore, Partnership for Religion and Education in Prison (PREP), a course Drew held in two different New Jersey correctional facilities, was enlightening because we had the chance to be in class with our incarcerated brothers. Many of us tend to think very little of our brothers behind bars. However, when in class with them, with all of us reading the same material, I realized that some of our most intelligent human beings are being held in prison, disproportionately Black people.

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[14] Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references come from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

All the students from the inside were Black and Brown (African American or Hispanic). Their theological, political, and social insight was superb, which is why I believe the American prison system is designed against Black and Brown people. It is just one of many ways America eliminates Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) from fully participating in society.

Finally, my cross-cultural journey to Zimbabwe was the most meaningful for me as a theological student on a ministry journey. This is where I had a spiritual awakening. At last, I saw a country in Africa through a non-American/European lens. As a result, I began new ways of thinking about the motherland and its spiritual, cultural, political, and social practices. We lived in the dorm at Africa University, where we also studied Christian Ethics and Global Issues. I admired Africa University's self-sufficiency and realized it is considered a third-world country only because European countries, like the U.S., strip their land of natural resources and do not pour back into it. This is not only a global pandemic; it is also domestic. Far too often, people from many ethnicities establish their businesses in Black communities, strip Black people of their monetary resources, and never pour back into those communities. Business owners take Black folk's money out of the community and then use that money to send their children to private schools.

My ministry Journey was also influenced by substance abuse. However, in March 1995, I walked to the hospital and told the receptionist, "I have been smoking crack all night, and if you do not help me, I'm going to kill myself." I was admitted to the hospital, where I stayed for at least three days. From there, I entered Turning Point, a twenty-eight-day inpatient drug rehabilitation center. While in Turning Point, I started turning my life over to God, specifically Jesus Christ. I learned in the rehabilitation center that I needed

to admit I have a substance abuse problem. If I had any chance of recovering successfully, I needed to turn my life back to the God of my childhood understanding, Jesus Christ. In addition, through private counseling sessions, peer group sessions, daily prayer, and meditation, I sensed a rebirth and a new connection with Jesus. After twenty-eight days in Turning Point, I was released, and rather than go home, I entered a halfway house called The Ladder Project. I spent one year at The Ladder Project, continuing my spiritual trajectory. After completing a year at The Ladder Project, I lived in a three-quarter house, an extension to The Ladder Project for another year.

I lived in the three-quarter house for about another year and then decided to marry. We found a church that we both thought was a great fit at the time. I was very involved with the prison and deliverance ministries for brothers and sisters struggling with substance abuse and helping them get reestablished in the community. After about two years of serving at Calvary Baptist Church of Morristown, New Jersey, I accepted God's call to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ a second time. I shared my unction to preach with the pastor, who gave me two books to read and met with me monthly, leading up to my initial sermon. After studying, praying, and preparing, I preached my initial sermon, and on March 22, 2004, I was licensed to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. The first time I accepted the call, I lived in Chicago, Illinois. I spoke with the pastor one Sunday morning; the next week, he had me stand before the church to make the announcement. Afterwards, I received great scrutiny from many church leaders and received little to no support from the pastor. Therefore, I was discouraged and ignored the call from God.

After serving approximately ten years at Calvary Baptist Church of Morristown, New Jersey, I moved to Hillsborough, New Jersey. By this time, my spouse and I had three sons. I began coaching football and baseball to ensure my boys would be treated fairly. In addition, it helped me overcome my fear of dealing with youth, not because of the children but because of their parents. Due to the distance between Hillsborough and Morristown, we joined a different church - First Baptist of Lincoln Gardens in Somerset, New Jersey. I served there as associate minister for approximately three years. I then served as associate minister to a friend and pastor at Calvary Baptist Church of Plainfield, New Jersey. Throughout my ministry journey, I often moved from one place to another. These multiple experiences have propelled me to be well-rounded.

I eventually moved my membership from Calvary of Morristown, New Jersey, to serve at First Baptist Church of Madison, New Jersey, whose affiliation is with American Baptist Churches USA. On August 9, 2015, I was licensed by Reverend A. Craig Dunn and ordained under his guidance and mentorship on July 30, 2017. My ministry journey has also forced me to grow in an administrative capacity. I have grown by working with culturally and generationally diverse populations, with a robust understanding of the interrelatedness of pastoral, priestly, and prophetic ministry in the church and the community. I am passionate about racial and generational atonement, which aims to create spiritual, social, racial, and generational harmony amongst the complex and diverse body of believers. I have learned to be prompt and efficient at organizing, with the ability to multitask. While serving as a pastor and executive director, I learned to pay strong attention to detail in my writing, listening, and verbal communication skills. I have

also developed organizational leadership, writing reports, balancing, and overseeing budgets of over $750,000.

In my current role, my primary responsibility as a faith leader in the Greater Lafayette Community, I am called and charged to connect multi-generations and multiethnic/cultures by offering spiritual guidance, practical application, creating and facilitating a sacred, brave safe space for interracial, intercultural, intergenerational, ecumenical, and interfaith dialogues and fellowship amongst this diverse community. The diversity among these urban, rural, and suburban individuals includes ethnicity, race, culture, ability, gender, age, and theological perspectives and beliefs. We work towards increasing community members' cultural competencies and healing generational and racial schisms. In addition, I specifically walk alongside organizations and their Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) departments for their educational enhancement and racial competence. Finally, my dedication and commitment to love and serve humanity through the lens of the "Religion of Jesus," wills me to do the work of social justice on behalf of those who are dehumanized, marginalized, and oppressed. One of my favorite scriptures is Luke 4:18-19; "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."[15]

[15] Lk 4:18-19.

Synergy

My spiritual autobiography and the context where I serve have led me on a ministry journey that I could never have imagined. However, this journey reminds me of the unpredictable journey Abraham, Hagar, and Moses endured. When I moved to the Greater Lafayette community on October 15, 2006, I had no idea I would answer the clarion call to do "Racial Atonement." It was in this community God revealed to me my raison d'être, reason for my existence. Therefore, as a faith leader, I believe ministry in this community is interrelated. Since then, I have discovered ministry outside the walls of a church is primary. For these reasons, a significant reason I have joined a multitude of community organizations and agencies, particularly those geared toward racial justice, by doing anti-racist work.

It all started with an invitation to join the University Religious Leaders (URL). The URL is a gathering of the college campus ministries at Purdue University; I served on their executive team as treasurer for two years. Then I joined the Lafayette Diversity Round Table (DRT), where I now serve as co-chairperson. I also joined the Lafayette Pastors' Alliance, a group of African American pastors who gather to support one another; I serve as their president. From there, I joined the West Lafayette Human Relations Commission, where I'm the co-chairperson. Furthermore, until last summer, I was on the National Campus Ministry Association (NCMA) executive team and an adjunct professor at Ivy Tech, the local community college. However, out of all the above organizations, the DRT is the most integral to my final project.

Approximately five years ago, a DRT member and I led a DRT meeting entitled Implicit Bias. In three sessions, we discussed ways to identify our implicit biases,

prejudice, and unconscious and conscious perceptions of people based on their body politic in a particular space/community. What do I mean by the body politic? Ibram X. Kendi asserts that "Any notion that a group of racialized bodies is more animal-like and violent than others."[16] Kendi goes on and declares, "Americans today see the Black body as larger, more threatening, more potentially harmful, and more likely to require force to control than a similarly . . . White body. The Black body had to be lynched by the thousands, deported by the tens of thousands, incarcerated by the millions, segregated by the tens of millions."[17]

Kendi continues, "We are not meant to fear suits with policies that kill. We are not meant to fear good White males with AR-15s. No, we are to fear the weary, unarmed Latinx body. The Body kneeling to Allah is to be feared. The Black body from hell is to be feared."[18] Kendi goes on to state, "Adept politicians and police and prison entrepreneurs manufacture the fear and stand before voters to deliver them-messiahs who will liberate them from fear of these other bodies."[19] Resmaa Menakem in his groundbreaking work, *My Grandmother's Hands, Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies,* speaks of the body politic in these terms, historically and generationally. Menakem states, "The white body sees itself as fragile and vulnerable, and it looks to police bodies for its protection and safety. Its view of the Black body is more complex and deeply paradoxical. It sees Black bodies as dangerously

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[16] Ibram X. Kendi, How to Be an Antiracist (New York: One World, 2023.), 78.

[17] Kendi, How to Be an Antiracist, 80.

[18] Kendi, How to Be an Antiracist, 85.

[19] Kendi, How to Be an Antiracist, 85.

impervious to pain and needing to be controlled."[20] Speaking historically, Menakem says, "Whenever one group oppresses, victimizes, brutalizes, or marginalizes another, many of the victimized people may suffer trauma, and then pass on that trauma response to their children as standard operating procedure.[21] Menakem continues,

> Children are highly susceptible to this because their young nervous systems are easily overwhelmed by things that older, more experienced nervous systems are able to override. As we have seen, the result is a soul wound or intergenerational trauma. When the trauma continues for generation after generation, it is called historical trauma. Historical trauma has been likened to a bomb going off, over and over again.[22]

Therefore, when I speak of the body politic, it is through generations, racial, professional, and class interactions between human beings, and one class of individuals has power over another to control; that's what I mean when I use the term body politic. The first implicit bias session focused on where we are as Americans in the Lafayette, Indiana, community. In the second session, we looked at the history of race in America that continues to rear its ugly head, and in the third and final session, we discussed where we wanted to go and what it would take to live in a post-racial America. From there, my partner and I brought this implicit bias three-session training to the faith community. However, we changed the name from implicit bias training to Racial Atonement: An Experiential Learning Module.

Racial Atonement: An Experiential Learning Module has a three-stage process, two hours for three days. 1) We meet and connect by using video footage of race

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[20] Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (Las Vegas, NV: Central Recovery Press, 2017), 27.

[21] Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands*, 38.

[22] Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands*, 38-39.

practices and by asking icebreaker questions such as: where are we concerning race and racism as a community? Are you from Indiana, and if so, what city? Have you ever lived outside the USA? Do you know if you have an ancestor/s who engaged in the enslavement industry? Where were you during the Civil Rights Movement? Those who have children, have you talked with them? And, finally, what life experiences bring you here that convince you of the urgency of now and your hope for a brighter tomorrow? 2) We put forth the foundational scriptures, one from the First/Old Testament and two from the Second/New Testament.

The First Testament scripture; "Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in."[23] The two Second Testament scriptures are: "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,"[24] and '"He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do…" A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you choose, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean."'[25] Then, we discuss the key terms that ground our work: atonement, repentance (historical/generational and communal), restorative Justice, conciliation, not reconciliation, and reparations.

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[23] Is 58:12.

[24] Mt 6:10.

[25] Mk 1:38-42.

Now that we know where we are racially as a community, 2) we start session two by asking how we got here and begin to explore our history as Indiana residents and citizens in the USA. This is where white participants begin to admit their roles in perpetuating America's original sin, the ideology of white supremacy. As God's children, we challenge our dear white sisters and brothers to turn the mirror on themselves, take an honest look at their complicity, and stop using Black people as their scapegoat.
After admittance, it is time to do the work of repentance. If white people are indeed Christians, repentance must be done on behalf of their ancestors, current community, and future descendants. The foundational scripture for this process is, "if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."[26]
3) The final session is the most crucial question: where do we go from here? And what can we do to be anti-racist? We discuss the meaning of atonement, ways that white people can use their white privilege positively and ethically, and financial restitution, also known as reparations, is a must; there is no racial atonement without financial restitution.

Conclusion

Project Title and Hypothesis

My project title is "Racial Atonement as Prophetic Activism: Building the Kin-dom of God Through Conciliation." If the people of faith do not see the humanity in

[26] 2 Chr 7:14.

people not like themselves, this cycle or polarizing culture will worsen. Humanity, particularly of the European persuasion or white race, from different tribes who claim Christianity have to recognize their sinfulness, the original sin of America, the ideology and lie of white supremacy. White Americans need to repent to God as a nation of people on behalf of their ancestors and their current community, seek forgiveness from God and be reconciled to God, and then pursue conciliation with their African American sisters and brothers. From there, the possibility of an anti-racist America becomes a reality, and we, as God's people, will be able to demonstrate the oneness that Jesus calls us to.

Ministry Project

The areas that I will explore are: three to five week project:

- The value of humanity among people from multiple ethnicities, cultures, and generations; moving from anti-Blackness to pro-Black full humanity
- Working on a social justice issue that affects all and leads to liberation for all
- Collaboration opportunities between churches from different racial demographics
- Celebrating culture awareness through annual gatherings
- This will be done through bible study, workshops, testimonies from churches that participate and small support groups

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The biblical prophets, including Jesus, are the central catalysts who inform this project, "Racial At-One-Ment (atonement) as Prophetic Activism, Building the Kin-dom of God through Conciliation." However, Micah 6:1-8 speaks most directly to this project.[1] Micah addresses the motifs within the community injustice, oppression, and exploitation that the children of God refused to confront, although they had such a great time doing temple worship. Therefore, their lack of kinship in the community and atonement was indeed warranted. Temple worship and sacrifices were self-absorbed; therefore, it did not transition to transformation within their community. Micah, as a spokesperson for God, was charged with a message of warning that would lead to repentance and restoration. "Micah 6:1-5 constitutes the prophet's presentation of YHWH's lawsuit or contentions against the people of Israel/Judah. The unit is frequently identified as an example of the so-called "covenant lawsuit" or "trial" genre because of the forensic term *rîb*, "controversy, contention . . ."[2]

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[1] Mi 6:1-8, New Revised Standard Version. Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this document are from the NRSV.

[2] Marvin A. Sweeney*, Berit Olam: the Twelve Prophets: Volume 2: Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (College, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 59.

This project addresses an identity-crisis struggle facing churches in the United States of America. In addition, this project challenges the universal church to be the lead in tearing down walls that keep us segregated racially and separated generationally. It will address the role the church has in a binary dichotomy of a polarizing culture. The prophet Isaiah suggests that the people of the Christian faith have a role to play in being "[r]epairer of breaches, restorer of streets for living (Is 58:12)." The church has a role to play that leads toward a more egalitarian, beloved community, as opposed to a partisan culture.

When I moved to West Lafayette, Indiana, to serve as pastor and director of the Baptist Student Foundation on the campus of Purdue University, I had no idea I would also be a minority voice for justice in this community. Although, as a campus pastor, I am very much involved in the welfare of the broader community, which is predominantly Euro-centric. The churches in this community are racially segregated and economically and generationally separated. Racial tensions are evident and explicit, particularly in k – 12 schools, the local higher education institutions, civil employment, and the church. In fact, the four bridges in the community are viewed as bridges that separate humanity rather than connect human bodies. Therefore, as a faith leader in this community with great potential, the biggest challenge is bringing faith leaders together to tear down the walls that segregate and separate us through the lens of "Racial At-One-Ment as Prophetic Activism, Building the Kin-dom of God through Conciliation."

The emphasis is on "at-one-ment"[3] to atonement, and the sacrifice involved primarily from self-proclaimed Christian white brothers and sisters who must play a role in the atonement process. Sacrifice is crucial in the atonement process. "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God . . . "[4] Eleonore Stump, in her book *Atonement*, quotes Linda Radzik's definition of atonement: "To atone is to undergo some kind of pain or sacrifice for wrongful acts."[5] Secondly, the focus is on building a "kin-dom"[6] or kinship of God here on earth: "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,"[7] through the spirit of God, using the concept of the African religious tradition, Ubuntu: "I am because we are."[8] In addition to kin-domship, while in the class Religious Leadership in a Pluralistic World, Dr. Lisa Hess, quoted Amos Young's exciting term, "Demonization to Kin-domization."[9] "The common humanity, testified to by St. Paul on the Areopagus means that rather than a demonization of the religious other, we must move beyond the failed task of Christianization and work

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[3] Jerry M. Carter, "Wednesday Night Bible Study: Teaching and Discussion," Calvary Baptist Church, Morristown, NJ: April 4, 2004.

[4] Ps 51:17.

[5] Eleonore Stump, *Atonement*, First ed. Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 7.

[6] Melanie Johnson DeBaufre, "Class Lecture," New Testament Class, Drew School of Theology, Madison, NJ: February 4, 2020.

[7] Mt 6:10.

[8] Iva Carruthers, "Lecture: God-Talk with Black Thinkers, Christianity & Islam," Drew School of Theology, Madison, NJ: October 8, 2021.

[9] Lisa Hess, "Lecture, Religious Leadership in a Pluralistic World," United Theology Seminary, Dayton, OH: January 24, 2024.

for the kin-domization of the gospel of Christ, with others . . . to the level that is possible."[10]

Thirdly, the focus will be racial "conciliation"[11] instead of racial reconciliation. Race is a social construct, meaning there is no biological evidence that any group of humans is superior or inferior to another.

> Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So, God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.[12]

It is evident that from the beginning, God gave humanity dominion over much of creation, not all, nor over one another. In addition, when discussing racial reconciliation, how can Black and white bodies be reconciled if they were never in a perfect union? White European bodies enslaved many Black African bodies. Can that oppressive institutional system be reconciled? No, therefore, conciliation is needed in the process of atonement because it seeks to tear down walls that separate us: animus, resentment, hostility, unhealthy anger, and even a Christian faith that separates.

Finally, the process of "Racial Atonement" is through a communal lens of repentance, not an individualistic approach that points to one individual's sin: "…if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from

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[10] Clifton Clarke and Amos Yong, "Global Renewal, Religious Pluralism, and the Great Commission: Towards a Renewal Theology of Mission and Interreligious Encounter," *Asbury Theological Seminary Series in Christian Revitalization. Pentecostal/Charismatic Section*, Vol. 4 (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2011), 170.

[11] James Holly Jr., a PhD candidate at Purdue University, shared the term "conciliation" as part of his work and scholarship. This conversation took place at Baptist Student Foundation at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, June 3, 2017.

[12] Gn 1:26-27.

their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."[13] It is not about blame but about truth-telling that leads to freedom and liberation for all humanity: "Then Jesus said . . . and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."[14] To my dear white sisters and brothers who claim Christianity, and say I was not an enslaver, I was not alive during the Jim and Jane Crow era. I never lynched anyone and was not present at a lynching, many of which happened after church. To them, I say, probably not; however, you benefit from those systemic systems; your silence is complicit, and we must acknowledge that we all share that history.

> Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idle in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.[15]

A "Racial Atonement" approach is to acknowledge the centuries of this nation's harmfulness inflicted on humanity, particularly Black, brown, and poor bodies; it is to mourn and lament and repent communally, then repair through recompense; it is a clarion call to this nation, America, to repentance; and the universal church must take the lead.

Micah: Literary Analysis

Although Micah lands in the biblical category as a minor prophet, Micah is granted with a huge task for the LORD. "Very little is known about Micah, whose name,

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[13] 2 Chr 7:14.

[14] Jn 8:31-32.

[15] Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2010), 86-87.

which means 'Who is like the LORD?' was common in ancient Israel."[16] James Luther Mays states,

> Who is like YHWH?' (mikayahu or mikayhu). The name is in fact an exclamation of praise, an expression of adoration and wonder at the in comparable God of Israel. The name belonged to a man from the village of Moresheth in Judah who was called by God to be his spokesman. His mission gave the originating impulse to the formation of the prophetic book which bears his name. The name is appropriate for a book whose range reflects the greatness of God.[17]

"There is a corresponding richness in the style and genre of language in the book. It contains announcements of judgment, oracles of salvation, controversy sayings, a lawsuit speech, instruction, laments, prayer, a proclamation of YHWH's appearance, a hymn."[18]

"Micah, called from rustic home to be a prophet, leaves his familiar surroundings to deliver a stern message of judgment to the princes and people of Jerusalem. Burden by the abusive treatment of the poor by the rich and influential, he turns his verbal rebukes upon any who would use their social or political power for personal gain."[19]

> Together with Amos, Isaiah, and Hosea, Micah was one of Israel's four great eighth-century BCE prophets. His rural roots in the Southern Kingdom, Judah, enable him to understand how the overbearing policies of the political, social, and religious leaders of his time affected the peasant class. A prophet more of the marketplace and town square than the temple or its sanctuary, Micah addressed injustice with passion and poetic eloquence.[20]

"One-third of Micah's book exposes the sins of his countrymen; another third pictures the punishment God is about to send; and the final third holds out the hope of restoration

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[16] Philip J. King, "Micah," *The HarperCollins Study Bible NRSV*, Fully Revised & Updated (San Francisco, CA: HaperOne, 1989), 1238.

[17] James Luther Mays, *Micah,* A Commentary of The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1976), 1.

[18] Mays, *Micah*, 1.

[19] *Holy Bible, New King James Version* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1982), 1070.

[20] *The HarperCollins Study Bible*, 1238.

once that discipline has ended. Through it all, God's righteous demands upon His people are clear: 'to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God' (6:8)."[21]

Unlink other prophetic books that introduce prophets with their call narrative such as Isaiah (6:1-9a), Jeremiah (1:4-9), and Ezekiel (2:1-8), the book of Micah does not. Micah starts with an address from YHWH; then we read information about Micah's origin, the kings who lived during Micah's prophetic reign, and concern for God's people in Samaria and Jerusalem. "The book of Micah offers no personal data of the prophet, nor does it narrate the call of the prophet. However, as the heading of the book (1:1) states, Micah lived in the days of kings Jotham (742-735), Ahaz (735-715), and Hezekiah (715-687), with a prophetic ministry during the last two reins. He was, therefore, a contemporary of Isaiah and Amos."[22]

> The message form Micah, derived from the sociopolitical and economic situation in the context of the international political dynamics of the eighth century B.C.E., has become more pertinent in the Third World with the development of economic globalization. Micah has a special appeal for Third World people who struggle to free themselves from the shackles of internal and external oppression. These personal experiences give them new insights as they approach this text as the Word of God. The sense of being dependent on powerful others for one's political, social, and economic future was very real for the Israelites during the period of Micah. Their fortune was totally at the mercy of the imperialistic aspirations of Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon, which was emerging as a world power.[23]

Micah lived in a time when wealth and power were concentrated in the hands of a few, and this brought social injustice. Greed and corruption were rampant and false prophets

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[21] *Holy Bible*, *New King James Version*, 1070.

[22] Po Ho Huang, *Global Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004), 295.

[23] Huang, *Global Bible Commentary*, 295.

flourished. Yet the people still felt entitled to God's blessings and protection. Like Isaiah, Hosea and Amos, Micah insists that genuine faith produces social justice.[24]

"The book is composed of two major parts, 1.2-5, 15 and 6.1-7, 20. Each part opens with an introductory summons to hear which identifies its audience (1.2 and 6.1a). Each is arranged so as to unfold a revelation of YHWH's way in the world."[25]

> The first part is addressed to a universal audience of all peoples. It combines YHWH's judgment of Samaria and Jerusalem (1.3-3.12) and his redemption of Zion and Israel (4.1-5.9) into a witness to the nations that YHWH's coming kingdom faces them with a choice between subdivision (4.1-4) and punishment (5.10-15). The second is addressed to Israel. It portrays an Israel that lives under the inescapable judgment of God (6.1-7.6) and yet stands before the promise of the salvation of God (7.8-17).[26]

The divisions in the book of Micah are as follows:

I. Background to Micah's prophecies (1:1-4)
   A. Introductory heading (1:1)
   B. An eschatological psalm (1:2-4)

II. Discourses on the Assyrian crisis (1:5-16)
   A. The wailing prophet (1:5-9)
   B. The alarm (1:10-16)

III. Prophecies of ethical concern (2:1-3:12)
   A. The Jerusalem men of wealth (2:1-10)
   B. Love for false prophets (2:11)

   C. Dreams of restoration (2:12-13)
   D. Appeal to the leaders of Judah (3:1-12)

IV. Visions of a glorious future (4:1-5:15)
   A. Universal religion and perpetual peace (4:1-8)
   B. The way of monarchy, militarism, and vengeance (4:9-5:6)
   C. A world of purity, blessing, and benediction (5:7-15)

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[24] Yoilah Yilpet and Tokunboh Adeyemo, *African Bible Commentary*, A One-Volume Commentary Written by 70 African Scholars (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 1049.

[25] Mays, *Micah: A Commentary*, 3.

[26] Mays, *Micah: A Commentary,* 3.

V. Adversity that triumphs in hope (6:1-7:20)
   A. God's controversy with his wayward people (6:1-5)
   B. Incidentals or fundamentals in religion (6:6-8)
   C. The Deity's final plea to Jerusalem (6:9-16)
   D. The pessimism of despair (7:1-6)
   E. The invincible triumph of faith (7:7-20)[27]

> With the exception of its superscription (1:1), the book of Micah consists of poetry, not prose. Characteristic features of Hebrew poetry — e. g., synonymous parallelism (the repetition of a thought, albeit with important variations in vocabulary, grammar forms and syntax; for example, 3:6), traditional word pairs, metaphors, and similes–appear throughout the book.[28]

The book of Micah is typical of the prophetic books that stem from the eighth century (Isaiah, Hosea, Amos). The primary message of these books is despair and outrage at perceived social disintegration with dire warnings of the consequences. The prophets all felt they got short shrift from their comfortable, confident, and unconcerned contemporaries, who saw them at best as reactionary scaremongers and at worst as dangerous political radicals. But their books, in the form we have them, are not just doom and gloom. The world that is contrasted with a world that could be, indeed, God willing, a world that will be, in which all injustice will be righted, all aggression vanquished and all oppressed released. Micah's particular contribution is concern for the policies and practices that create the poor. His ire is strongest against the political and economic actions (debt-inducing loans, and seizures, uncontrolled violence, extortionate prices, fraudulent payments) that impoverish the hard-working backbone of society. But he does not spare the religious establishment for its support of the wealthy, and he sees it all as a failure of true faith, true submission to the laws and worship of Israel's savior YHWH.

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[27] Daniel J. Simudson, "The Book of Micah," in *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary In Twelve Volumes*, vol. 7, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 535.

[28] Simudson, "The Book of Micah," 535.

Micah is of particular interest to women for his championing of justice in the name of God for all people, including women and children. But he is also of interest for the extent of the female imagery he uses in his pregnant pictorial poetry. His imagery recognizes the good and bad in humanity, male and female, and overturns some common stereotypes.[29]

Micah: Historical Analysis

We know very little about the prophet Micah. "A superscription (1:1) associates him with the reigns of three Judea kings: Jotham (742–735 BCE), Ahaz (735–715), and Hezekiah (715–687). Perhaps he was a younger contemporary of the prophet Isaiah. Unlike Jerusalem Isaiah, however, Micah was from Moresheth, a small village lying southwest of Judah's capital city."[30]

> Micah (1:1) suggests dates between 750 and 708 B.C. Many scholars have tried unsuccessfully to date individual prophecies more specifically. It would seem that a degree of generalization has taken place so that each era could identify in the book its besetting sins and God's discipline through current events. Moreover, while most scholars believe the core of Micah comes from this period, the extent of this core is hotly debated. Evidence suggests it was common practice for prophecies to be collected, added to and commented on overtime. In this way God's living word was interpreted a new for each generation.[31]

Micah gives a quite specific description of the purpose of his mission in 3.8 which is consistent with these texts and inconsistent with most of the other material in the book "These sayings display a continuity and consistency of style, setting, and message — the

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[29] Catherine Clark Kroeger and Mary J. Evans, *The IVP Women's Bible Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 463.

[30] Simudson, "The Book of Micah," 533.

[31] Kroeger and Evans, *The IVP Women's Bible Commentary*, 463.

language, setting, and message of the rest of the material suggests it consists of sayings and redaction which date from the late seventh century on."[32]

> In the year of Jehoiakim's accession (609/608), Jeremiah was arrested and hastily brought to trial for his life because he had prophesied against Jerusalem and the temple (Jer.26; see also ch. 7). During the trial certain 'elders of the land' testified in his defence by recalling the prophecy of Micah, the Moreshite, who in the time of King Hezekiah had announced the coming destruction of Jerusalem. They were able to cite the very words of Micah from the conclusion of the oracle preserved in Micah 3.9–12.[33]

We assume Micah is a male from the use of the Hebrew masculine "you" in Micah 2:6. We learn most about him by examining his concerns. His keen sense of social justice is everywhere evident. He feels deeply for ordinary people struggling to make ends meet, and he fights strongly against any unjust structures and activities that tip such people in to poverty.[34] He starts by championing the cause of rural citizens (Mic 2:2) who ought to be self-sufficient contributors to the economy. He then moves on to the oppressed townsfolk who lose their hard-earned profits to extortion (Mic 3:11). His courage to stand against the tide is glimpsed when he is goaded into rousing self-defense (Mic 2:6-7; 3:8), but it is at great personal cost (Mic1:8).[35]

Scholars have argued that Micah's home must be Moreshet Gath, which is identified as Tell Judeidah, a site located in the Judean Shephelah about twenty-one miles southwest of Jerusalem, nine miles east of the Philistine city of Gath, and one mile north of Beth Guvrin. Moreshet Gath would have been one of the forty-six cities and numerous

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[32] Mays, *Micah A Commentary*, 13.

[33] Mays, *Micah*, 13.

[34] Kroeger and Evans, *The IVP Women's Bible Commentary*, 464.

[35] Kroeger and Evans, *The IVP Women's Bible Commentary*, 464.

villages that the Assyrian king Sennacheerib claims to have conquered during his invasion of Judah in 701 B.C.E.[36]

> Micah may well have been an elder of Moreshet Gath, but his presence in Jerusalem is very likely the result of his having been forced to flee for safety before the advancing Assyrian army. His frequent references to social abuse and the desperation to obtain the means for survival (Mic 2:1-2; 3:1-12), the terror of the towns and villages of Philistia and the Shephelah (Mic 2:8-9), and the exile of the people and destruction of Jerusalem (Mic 2:12-13; 3:12), all point to a man who knows first-hand the terrors of war and the brutality of life in an ancient city under siege. Indeed, the prophet's message appears to be based on this experience.[37]

Overall, the book of Micah is designed to address the future of Jerusalem or Israel in the aftermath of the Babylonian exile. Although Micah lived and spoke during the Assyrian period of the late-eighth century B.C.E., the reference to Babylonian exile in Micah 4:10 and the debate with and use of the Isaiah tradition as mentioned above indicate that this is the case.[38]

Our knowledge of the prophet Micah has to be drawn from what we read in the book of Micah, except for a unique and impressive mention in Jeremiah 26:18, a century or so after Micah prophesied in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah. Wolff's theory (1978, 6–8; 1990, 5–9) is that Micah functioned as a local elder or head of a clan, and so may have been one of the elders of the land in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 8:3; 20:7).

> The title of Micah indicates that Micah the prophet prophesied in the eighth century, in the reigns of Jotham (759– 43 B. C. E.), Ahaz (or Jehoahaz; 743– 27 B. C. E.), and Hezekiah (727– 698/9). During this period the Neo-Assyrian empire was rising to power, especially under Tiglath-pileser III (745– 727 B. C. E.). His successor, Shalmaneser V (726– 22 B. C. E.), attacked Samaria and after

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[36] Marvin A. Sweeney, *Berit Olam: the Twelve Prophets*: Volume 2, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 2, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[37] Sweeney, *Berit Olam, 2.*

[38] Sweeney, *Berit Olam: the Twelve Prophets*, 3.

> a three year siege it fell to him or his successor, Sargon II (722– 705 B. C. E.), who deported its inhabitants to Assyria (1:6).[39]

Micah's message bears significantly upon Judah and Jerusalem, or Zion. Indeed, one of the striking features of the book of Micah is that it shares with Isaiah the important oracle about the pilgrimage of the nations to Zion (Mic 4:1-4; cf. Is 2:2-4). "The book of Micah stands sixth in the Book of the Twelve in the [m]t form, but third in the [lxx] (after Hosea and Amos). Perhaps surprisingly, it is the first of the Twelve to turn the spotlight of prophetic criticism directly on Judah and Jerusalem."[40]

Social/Cultural Analysis

The basic clue to Micah's understanding of his role and to the foundation of his proclamation is the correspondence between the purpose of YHWH's imminent intervention in history (1.5a) and the commission he received through his endowment with special powers by God (3.8).[41]

> He was the herald who announced that YHWH was about to come down from his place to deal with Jacob's crime; he was the interpreter who identified what that crime was and declared it to Israel. All his oracles of judgment (2.1-5; 3.1-4, 5-7, 9-12) were spoken in carrying out that commission. In them he identified the sinners and their sin and announced what the consequences of YHWH's intervention would be for the sinners. Micah's statement about his vocation gives no information about its place in his personal history. The statement is not a report about the past, but a claim attached to an oracle against prophets who mislead the people (3.5-7).[42]

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[39] Philip Peter Jenson, *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah: A Theological Commentary*, Bloomsbury Academic &Professional, 2008, ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=742869. Created from dtl on 2022-04-28 00:55:43,96.

[40] J. G. McConville, "Micah, Book of," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets*, ed. Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), ProQuest Ebook *Central*, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc. org/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=2009926.

[41] Mays, *Micah: A Commentary*, 17.

[42] Mays, *Micah: A Commentary*, 17.

Micah 1:2-16 constitutes the prophet's announcement of punishment against Samaria and Israel, which stands as a paradigm for the judgment that will also come upon Jerusalem and Judah. Such a correlation between the two kingdoms presupposes their past relationship as allies for much of the eighth century, particularly during the reigns of Jeroboam ben Joash of Israel (786–746 B.C.E.) and Uzziah ben Amaziah of Judah (783–742 B.C.E.) when Judah served as a vassal to Israel.[43]

> A series of royal assassinations rocked the northern kingdom during the years after the death of Jeroboam ben Joash as various proponents of confrontation with Assyria vied for power against those who sought to continue the alliance. Thus, Shallum assassinated Jeroboam's son Zechariah in 746, but Shallum in turn was assassinated a month later by Menahem who continued the alliance with Assyria during his reign (745–738 B.C.E.).[44]

This time was filled with intrigue, assassination, betrayal, and personal gain wherein the leaders did not take into account their trust in the Lord or the directive of the prophets.

> During the course of the Assyrian invasion of Israel, Pekah was assassinated by Hoshea (732– 724 B.C.E.), who promptly surrendered to Tiglath Pileser III, but the Assyrians stripped Israel of its outlying territories in the Trans-Jordan, Galilee, and coastal plain, incorporating them as provinces of the Assyrian empire, and left Israel with only the central hill country of Ephraim. Judah was forced to become a vassal of Assyria and was obligated to pay a heavy tribute to the Assyrians in return for the protection provided to the small kingdom.[45]

The specific concern of Micah for "my people" (2:8) could also reflect the traditional role of elders in attaining justice for their village.[46]

> However, we know too little about this class, and characteristic prophetic motifs are sufficient to explain the language and themes of the book (Carreira 1981). The

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[43] Sweeney, *Berit Olam: the Twelve Pr*ophets, 16.

[44] Sweeney, *Berit Olam: the Twelve Pr*ophets, 16-17.

[45] Sweeney, *Berit Olam: the Twelve Pr*ophets, 16-17.

[46] Jenson, *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah: A Theological Commentary*, 95.

> same objections apply to Hillers' proposal (1984, 4– 8) that Micah is a prophet of a new age, similar to the millenarian enthusiasts of other ages. Like them, he rages against the economic oppression of his group, and speaks of the need to remove foreign elements (5:10–15), the coming time of troubles (4:9–10), the reversal of the social classes (4:6–7), a future righteous, peaceable ruler (5:2–5[1–4]) and the coming golden age (4:1– 4). However, all these features are also aspects of the general prophetic understanding of how God relates to Israel and the nations.[47]

What is perhaps most important for understanding Micah is to recognize the general state of insecurity and danger. God's judgment on a sinful people at the hand of an Assyrian army was a possibility that anyone could understand.[48]

Micah lists three capacities given (or evoked?) in the divine endowment. Two, might and power, are quite similar in effect and belong to the physical and psychological ability to do what he had to do. The other gift, justice, is of a different order. It is specifically cognitive and social.

> It involves a knowledge of a tradition about what is right in the legal and economic and civil process. Endowment with justice (mi!pa/) must have meant a focus of all Micah's personal concern and conviction on the tradition, and an elevated capacity to grasp and articulate its critical meaning for the society he observed. In two of his four oracles of judgment the term appears as the primary norm of indictment (3.1, 9). In his other sayings he employed normative terms which serve as synonyms and antonyms of justice. In so far as it is possible for one notion to be the central critical factor in a prophet's consciousness and speech, mi!pa/ was that notion for Micah.[49]

The interpretation of disaster and suffering as judgment for sin needs constantly to be examined. Micah clearly states that the calamities the people will endure are the consequence of human behavior. All will suffer, though their leaders are most culpable.[50]

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[47] Jenson, Philip Peter. Obadiah, Jonah, Micah: A Theological Commentary, 95.

[48] Jenson*, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah: A Theological Commentary*, 96.

[49] Mays, *Micah: A Commentary,* 18.

[50] Simudson, "The Book of Micah," 537.

> When bad things happen, is there always some sin lurking in the background that explains human suffering and sustains our belief in a just God? The doctrine of retribution retains its hold in the lives of many faithful people. The book of Micah gives an occasion to think about it, to see what is valid and what needs critique, what should be applied personally and communally, and what should be rejected as not fitting one's own circumstances.[51]

An essential problem is that when Yahweh is dethroned and replaced by an idol, a spiritual insufficiency is expressed in seeking more and more for the self. This is expressed in limitless coveting, which when acted out leads to the proliferation of injustice. This is exactly the picture in Micah 2–3.[52]

> The rich never have enough and think up and dream of ways they can get more and more because they cannot be satisfied with what they have, since they have abandoned Yahweh. Thus, they covet lands and seize them, estates and rob them. And this is also the hidden motive behind the other examples of injustice in the book. The judges in the courts, the priests at the temple, and the prophets wherever they are found can all be purchased with money in the form of bribes. Money has become the idolatrous force that drives their lives and they must covet it, and this covetousness leads to cannibalism in the courts, connivance among the prophets, and corruption of the priesthood. The result is appalling injustice.[53]

Major Theme

The central symbol in the book of Micah and in the book of the Twelve is the temple (Mic 4:1–5). Its exaltation to the supreme place in the world means that Yahweh is exalted and his name has become universal. This means that when the nations come to

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[51] Simudson, "The Book of Micah," 537.

[52] Stephen G. Dempster, *Micah* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 10, ProQuestEbookCentral, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=5122923, Created from dtl on 2022-06-06 22:28:41, 214-215.

[53] Stephen G. Dempster, *Micah* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017),10-11, ProQuestEbookCentral, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=51229 23, Created from dtl on 2022-06-0622:28:41, 214-21 5.

Jerusalem, they are acknowledging that Yahweh is supreme; when they hear his Torah, they are not only corrected and satisfied; they are changed.[54]

> Their 'bloated appetites' for more and their aggression for war to satisfy and defend those appetites are gone. They now have a love for ḥesed, and they take that new ḥesed heart and fashion instruments of peace from their weapons of conquest. They begin to practice justice in the world – walking in Yahweh's ways – after which each person can sit under their own fig tree in a plot of land, complete with its own vineyard. There are no more 'bloated appetites' because Yahweh's leadership supplies what has been lacking — satisfaction, and there is a new motive to love ḥesed and to practice justice. Thus, they learn war no more. A world of idolatry, and hence covetousness and injustice, will become a world of true worship, ḥesed, and justice. Idolatry will finally give way to doxology (6:8)![55]

At the very heart of the book of Micah is the vision of a restored and elevated temple, with Yahweh speaking words of life to a needy world. His speech addresses the nations and offers them peace to walk in his ways. Later this walking in the ways of Yahweh is defined more fully as doing justice and loving ḥesed.[56]

Advocates for social justice love to quote the book of Micah. Its scathing critique of the wealthy who "covet fields, and seize them; houses, and take them away" (2:2). It has a radical vision of a day in which "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (4:3), and its plaintive insistence that what YHWH requires is to "do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (6:8) have been rallying cries for those who seek a more just world. Often paired with quotes

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[54] Stephen G. Dempster, *Micah* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 13, ProQuestEbookCentral, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=5122923, Created from dtl on 2022-06-06 22:28:41, 214-215.

[55] Stephen G. Dempster, *Micah* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 13. ProQuestEbookCentral, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=5122923, Created from dtl on 2022-06-06 22:28:41, 216.

[56] Stephen G. Dempster, *Micah* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 13, ProQuestEbookCentral, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=5122923, Created from dtl on 2022-06-06 22:28:41, 216.

from Amos, verses from Micah adorn the banners under which agents of change march forward.[57]

> After two chapters of promised salvation for Jerusalem, Mic 6 returns to judgment. Like Mic 1–3, Mic 6 employs courtroom imagery and makes accusations of social injustice. Micah 7 encompasses a wider range of topics and emotions: the speaker's lament, which implies further accusations; Jerusalem's expression of confidence that YHWH will vindicate her in the face of her enemy; and a moving appeal for YHWH to be gracious. Here we encounter one of the Bible's most rousing and memorable calls to ethical action, as well as a pathos-filled appeal to divine mercy. These words allow us both to reflect on our own understandings of God and our responsibility to one another.[58]

While Micah 3:1-4 focuses on political leaders who "devour" the people, 3:5-7 focuses on the religious leaders who sell them out. In Micah 3:5-7, the speaker turns his attention to the prophets who have misled the people into thinking that they will soon find peace if the people are willing to pay them.[59]

> The oracle denounces these prophets, whose cynical behavior allows them to take advantage of the people's trust. People come to the prophets and request a prediction about the future. If the prophet has been paid, then that prophet gives them a positive response (peace), but if the prophet has not been paid, then that prophet pronounces a curse on the people (war). The problem with this behavior is that it cannot be trusted. The greed of the prophet, not God's intentions, controls the message.[60]

Micah 6:1–7:7 divides into four rhetorical units that alternate between YHWH speeches and prophetic speeches: 6:1-5, 6-8, 9-16; and 7:1-7. The first unit (6:1-5) begins

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[57] Julia M. O'Brien, *Micah* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015), xxxix-lxi, Project Muse, muse. jhu.edu/book/46614.

[58] O'Brien, *Micah,* 73-118.

[59] James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve, Micah–Malachi,* Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2011), 547.

[60] Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve, Micah–Malachi*, 547.

with YHWH's call to convene a trial and moves to the reading of the charges. The prophet addresses YHWH's expectations and implies the people's guilt in 6:6-8.[61]

> Undoubtedly the most famous passage in Micah, this rhetorical unit reflects profoundly on the question of what it means to be a person of faith. The passage contains two interconnected sections as the speaker changes from 6:6-7 (an unidentified individual, addressed as 'human') to 6:8 (the prophetic response). The unnamed speaker asks a series of questions with cultic, literary, the- ological, and ethical implications. Micah 6:8 then provides the prophet's response, with a statement that in many ways could be classified as a description of biblical ethics in a nutshell.[62]

Finally, according to Michael Carden, "There is no clear narrative in Micah, and the book is noteworthy for its ambiguity and its sudden shifts in mood and voice, the latter shifting not only from prophetic to YHWH but also giving utterance to several other unidentified figures."[63] Carden continues, "These ambiguities are 'further compounded by the difficult Hebrew scriptures: ambiguous referents, odd and difficult phrases, and frequent switches in gender and person, addressor and addressee.'"[64] Carden goes on:

> Erin Runions highlights these features in her translation of Micah. For example, in Micah 7.11-12, there is a shift in gender of the addressee from feminine to masculine, 'A day (is) for building your walls. That day boarders are distant. That (is the) day, and he will come unto you from afar, Assyria and the cities of Egypt.' Is the feminine 'you' whose walls are to be built the same 'you' unto whom he will come? Apart from the first person, all Hebrew verbs have both gender and number. Micah employs dramatic shifts in the gender and number of both verbs and pronouns to heighten ambiguity.[65]

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[61] Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve, Micah–Malachi*, 571.

[62] Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve, Micah–Malachi*, 573.

[63] Deryn Guest, ed., *The Queer Bible Commentary* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2015), 443.

[64] Guest, *The Queer Bible Commentary*, 443.

[65] Guest, *The Queer Bible Commentary*, 443.

Micah 6:6–8 Word Study

Micah 6:6-8 reads,

> With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" [66]

The name *Yahweh* (yah-Weh) (LORD) occurs more than 6,800 times in the Old Testament. It appears in every book but Esther, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. As the sacred, personal name of Israel's God, it was eventually spoken aloud only by priests worshipping in the Jerusalem temple.[67]

> After the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, the name was not pronounced. *Adonay* was substituted for *Yahweh* whenever it appeared in the biblical text. Because of this, the correct pronunciation of this name was eventually lost. English editions of the Bible usually translate *Adonay* as 'Lord' and *Yahweh* as /LORD.' *Yahweh* is the name that is most closely linked to God's redeeming acts in the history of his chosen people.[68]

LORD (YAHWEH) "is the personal name of Israel's God revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:15. Apparently deriving from some form of the verb "to be." While the OT depicts Yahweh in complex ways, Second Temple Judaism emphasized God's uniqueness, the only true God who is sole creator and ruler of all things."[69]

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[66] *The HarperCollins Study Bible*, 1246-1247.

[67] *The HarperCollins Study Bible*, 1246-1247.

[68] Ann Spangler, *Praying the Names of GOD* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2016), 54.

[69] Andy Johnson, *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, I-Ma, Vol. 3 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 687.

The word LORD is a "Translation of the Hebrew words *Yahweh, Adonai*, and *Adon* as well as the Aramaic word *mar* and the Greek word *kurious*."[70] LORD also means "Master, sir, title of respect."[71] "'ĕlōhîm; God [pl.] of Majesty]; gods; mighty one, great one, judge."[72]

> 'ĕlōhîm 'This is the plural form el . . . the most common meaning is 'God' – of humankind in general, of Israel in particular, and as creator of the cosmos. It is possible that the very word 'ĕlōhîm, plural in form but singular in meaning, conveys the idea of plurality within the Godhead with reference to the God of Israel. God is not only 'One' in an absolute sense, but also contains 'within himself,' so to speak, a plurality of characteristics and personhood.[73]

God (ELOHIM) El (el) is "A word for 'God' in the ancient Semitic languages. The word could be used as either a proper noun or a common noun. As a proper noun, El refers to a god in the pantheons of the Canaanite world. In the Bible the word occurs often in personal names (e.g., Eliab, Elijah). Elohim (Heb.)."[74]

> God (god), a general term for the deity (or in the plural, deities). In the Bible, the word is used to refer both to the deity worshiped in the Judeo-Christian tradition (God) and to deities worshiped by other peoples (god or gods). In the OT: the word God most often translates the Hebrew EI (or the plural form, Elohim), the general Semitic term for deity which is probably derived from a root denoting power or strength. Although Israel's faith apparently emerged from a poly theistic environment as a strong henotheism (i.e., worship of only one among a plurality of deities) and evolved into a highly developed ethical monotheism, the frequently

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[70] Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Concise Bible Dictionary With Complete Pronunciation Guide to Bible Names* (Grand Rapids, MI: Merrill F. Unger and W. Murray Severance, 1983), 115.

[71] Karen Dockrey, Johnnie Godwin, and Phyllis Godwin, *The Student Bible Dictionary: A complete learning system to help you understand words, people, places, and events of the Bible* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Publishing, 2000), 146.

[72] Spiros Zodhiate, *Hebrew – Greek Key Word Study Bible; Key Insights into God's Word. New International Version* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG International, Inc. Publishers, 1996), 1905.

[73] Stephen D. Renn, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Word Studies for Key English Bible Words Based on the Hebrew and Greek Texts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005). 445.

[74] Paul J. Achtemeier, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: Harper & amp, 1985), 275.

> used plural form should not be understood as a residue from an earlier Period. The form is the plural of majesty (magnitude) and a sign of honor paid to the Deity.[75]

"The Hebrew term *elohim*, a plural form, may be used of gods in general (i.e., as a common noun) and, by extension, also images representing the gods. When the plural form is used of a single deity, Hebrew grammarians call that form 'plural of majesty.'"[76]

"As a common noun, the Hebrew term may occur in genitive constructions, thus forming divine epithets like, 'God of the Hebrews,' 'God of Israel,' 'God of the ancestors,' 'God of the covenant,' 'God of heaven and earth,' 'God of salvation.'" [77]

> The animal for this sacrifice could be a young bull, lamb, goat, turtledove, or young pigeon, but it had to be a perfect and complete specimen. The type of animal chosen for this sacrifice seems to be dependent on the financial ability of the one who brings the offering. The one bringing the offering was to lay a hand on the animal, indicating that the animal was taking the person's place, and then he was to kill it. The priest then collected the blood and sprinkled it around the altar and the sanctuary, and the worshiper cut up and skinned the animal. If a bird was brought, the priest killed it. The one who made this sacrifice did so to restore the relationship with God and to atone for some sin.[78]

The burnt offering (Lev.1) was the commonest and most general sacrifice. Appropriate for atonement or thanksgiving, its purpose, basically, was to win God's favor. It was probably the oldest kind of sacrifice (mentioned throughout the Bible) and played a major role in public worship (Num 28-29) and rites of cleansing. The animal offered had to be male (except birds). The animal was entirely burned on the altar, except for the hide, which went to the priest (Lev. 7:8).[79]

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[75] Achtemeier, *Bible Dictionary*, 381.

[76] C. L. Seow, *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, D-H, Vol. 2 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 589.

[77] Seow, *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 589.

[78] Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible, 2003), 1267.

[79] Achtemeier, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 1223.

William R. Scott speaks about burnt offering in these terms: "One of the most common forms of Israelite sacrifice (Heb. ʿôlâ, lit., 'ascending.' As this kind of offering was consumed by fire, the term undoubtedly refers to the smoke which ascends from the alter. There was no one particular occasion for burnt offerings."[80] Scott continues,

> We also find burnt offerings offered in thanksgiving (Exod. 18:12), as expiation for guilt (Lev. 5:7; Job 1:5), to fulfill a vow (Lev. 22:18; Judg. 11:31), in connection with divination (1 Sam. 7:9), to seek the Lord's favor (2 Sam. 24:25), as part of the consecration of the priests (Exod. 29), and apparently to consecrate an altar (Judg. 6:26; 2 Sam. 24:25). Some of the situations which call for a burnt offering were thus prescribed, while others were freewill offerings. The distinction between burnt offering and other offerings is that it was a gift which was totally devoted to the Lord, not being consumed by humans.[81]

The term(s) calf/calves are defined as: "A young bull or cow, *Bos Taurus*. Calves were killed for food and for sacrifice. The young bull symbolized vigor, strength, and endurance, and the choice of this animal rather than another to represent God was favored also by the pomp of the bull worship in Egypt."[82]

Transgression is also an "Image of sin as overstepping the limits of God's law."[83] Justice is "(mišpāṭ): right, rectitude, (attributes of God or man); ordinance, decision (in law), right, privilege, due (legal)."

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[80] David Noel Freedman, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019), 462-463.

[81] Freedman, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible,* 463.

[82] Henry Gehman, *The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1976), 135-136.

[83] *Holman Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "transgression" (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2015), 2248.

Transgression is defined as "The violation of a law or code."[84] Transgression is in relation with sin. Sin, according to Jay P. Green, Jr., is "Cḥaṭṭā'āṯ (khat-taw-aw') an offence."[85]

> Evil doing seen in religious perspective, not only against humanity, society, others, or oneself, but against God. Israel's God sets the ideal, the standard for human behavior, and the most frequent biblical words for sin (Heb *hata*). As Lawgiver, God sets limits to man's freedom; another frequent term (Heb abar) describes sin as transgression, overstepping those set limits. Similar terms are pesa (Heb) (rebellion, transgression); asam (Heb) (trespassing upon God's kingly prerogative, incurring guilt).[86]

Soul is defined as "nephesh, a breathing creature . . . self; life; person; heart."[87] Justice is defined as "mišpāṭ, a verdict"[88] Obery Hendricks asserts, "the Greek word *dikaiosune*, as 'justice' rather than the usual 'righteousness.' The students of biblical Greek know, the term can be translated either way. However, unlike 'righteousness,' with its strictly one-dimensional personal moral implications, 'justice' connotes more than individual piety. It also means holistic, collective – that is, social – righteousness."[89] Hendricks continues, "Because of Jesus holistic spirituality, his use of *dikaiosune* in these and many of the other sayings in which it is found should be understood as encompassing

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[84] Tremper Longman, III, ed. *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 2386, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[85] Jay P. Green, *The Interlinear Hebrew/Greek English Bibl*e, 2nd ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985), 713.

[86] Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Volume 2, J-Z (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House Company/ Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 1988), 1967.

[87] Green, *The Interlinear Hebrew/Greek English Bible*, 713.

[88] Green, *The Interlinear Hebrew/Greek English Bible*, 713.

[89] Obery M. Hendricks, *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of the Teachings of Jesus and How They Have Been Corrupted*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2006), 18.

both of the term's meanings, that is, personal righteousness and social justice."[90] The term "love" is translated as 'ahăḇâ. "According to the OT, three preconditions must exist for us to know what it means to love. First, we have the capacity for relationships because we are made in the likeness of a personal God. God created us to reciprocate love back to him, in a relationship of mutual love."[91]

> Second, the true meaning of love depends on a true understanding of God, whose love causes him to pursue human beings even though their hearts have turned away from him for other substitute 'loves.' This second point assumes that human beings still love, but they do so in a way distorted by sin. Sin causes human beings to live their lives as though God did not exist. However, God in his mercy has chosen to intervene through his redemptive acts in history and through revelatory speech in order to deliver people from the blindness and corruption of sin. His pursuit of his unfaithful sons and daughters gives us a picture of what true love looks like. Third, God's pursuit of human beings in history was by means of election and the establishment of a covenant.[92]

Therefore, in closing, there is the understanding that *agapaō* love is at the crux of the human-to-Divine relationship that causes God to pursue humanity indefinitely. At the heart of human-to-human relationships is *agapaō*. I now move to my historical foundations portion of this thesis where you will find African Americans empowered by love that sought racial reconciliation, empowerment, and justice for Black people.

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[90] Hendricks, *The Politics of Jesus*, 18.

[91] Longman, III, *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary,* 1562.

[92] Longman, III, *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary,* 1562.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

In my early adult years, I began to question the status of African Americans in the so-called United States of America, particularly in relation to white Americans. The question of race, its social construct in America, and what it means to be in a Black male body created by God has haunted my spirit. Reconciliation and reconstruction have been attempted several times with little permanent effect, or in the words William J. Barber, II, "partial Progress."[1] Manning Marable states, "During two brief moments in history, the United States experienced major social movements which, at their core, expressed a powerful vision of multicultural democracy and human equality."[2] Marable continues, "The first was developed before the seminal conflict in American history, the Civil War (1861-65), and came to fruition in the twelve-year period of reunion, reconstruction and racial readjustment which followed (1865-77)."[3]

[1] William J. Barber, ll and Jonathon Wilson-Hartgrove, *The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement is overcoming The Politics of Division and Fear* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2016), 115.

[2] Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-2006*, 3rd ed. (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi. 2007). 3.

[3] Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 3.

For centuries, the intersectionality of race, class, and gender have plagued African Americans. It is the one, two, three punch that African Americans must withstand to survive in the so-called United States of America. Marble, continues,

> [N]o real understanding of modern America is possible without an analysis of this nation's ongoing burden of race and class, a social and economic dilemma which was created by almost 250 years of chattel slavery. The racial patterns of the present and the possibilities for the future are buried in that past . . . in the myriad of successes and failures of the Civil War.[4]

I would have never imagined, not even in my wildest dreams or most intimate time with God, that I would be writing about the urgent need for "racial atonement" (at-one-ment) as prophetic activism through the lens of racial conciliation, and not "racial reconciliation."

This long-life journey of mine feels like I have been on a quest to understand the divine relationship with humanity and humanity to humanity. I could have never imagined that in my early childhood, my family and I would encounter racist police. As a tri-captain of my high school basketball team, I could have never imagined that my life was almost choked out of me by this giant over-powering white male police officer during a basketball game. I never thought that the years my late great dear maternal grandmother made me go to Sunday school and church service every Sunday morning would be the foundation to lead me to seek "racial atonement," as opposed to racial reconciliation.

Although the biblical text speaks highly of the ministry of reconciliation, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through

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[4] Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 4.

Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation."[5] This reconciliation is God who came in a body to reconcile humanity back to divinity because there was once a perfect union. The scripture continues, "that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."[6]

God reconciling humanity to divinity is the work of God. However, humanity's reconciliation with humanity is questionable, particularly regarding race, love, and justice. However, there have been attempts to reconcile within communities in the so-called, supposedly, United States of America. My historical foundation will focus on W.E.B. Du Bois and the Niagara Movement (the predecessor to the NAACP), and Marcus Garvey's Pan-African Movement, University Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). These organizations were engines that promoted and attempted racial reconciliation. The years covered mainly will be from 1865 to the 1920s.

W.E.B. Du Bois: His Work, Colleagues, and Associations

One of the most challenging social problems that continue to permeate our society is the social construct of race and the systemic ways racism is maintained. Although, yet to be resolved, there have been numerous attempts at racial reconciliation. During the postbellum period, 1905 to approximately 1910, W.E.B. Dubois led a group of Black intellectuals and social activists and formed the Niagara Movement (NM). Reiland

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[5] 2 Cor 5:17, NRSV.

[6] 2 Cor 5:17.

Rabaka writes, “One of the major themes of Du Bois’s discourse revolves around race and racism or, more specifically, the critical, systematic, and social scientific study of race and the political economy of racism. However, race and racism were only part of the problem that faced a dying humanity.”[7] Rabaka continues, “no matter what issue Du Bois critically engaged, it should be emphasized that his major preoccupation was ever the dialectic of oppression and liberation.”[8] Commenting on Du Bois’ thought, Cheryl Townsend Gilkes asserted, “oppression always was the central issue.”[9] While Du Bois’s concern for the progress of African Americans was through education, Booker T. Washington, another prominent Black educated man, believed the road for African Americans advancement in America was through wealth development through industrial, vocational skills, politics, and understanding the Black Diaspora.

In the book *W.E.B. Du Bois Black Radical Democrat*, Manning Marable writes, “Booker T. Washington, whose educational and political philosophy was inferior to that of Du Bois, excelled in bureaucratic and subterranean political confrontations.”[10] Marable continues, “Washington had been anointed . . . leader of the Negro race, and he had no reservations about using every possible strategy to secure his position. From the Boston Riot of 1903 until the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of

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[7] Reiland Rabaka, “The Souls of Black Radical Folk,” *Journal of Black Studies* 36, no. 5 (2006): 734.

[8] Reiland Rabaka, “The Souls of Black Radical Folk: W. E. B. Du Bois, Critical Social Theory, and the State of Africana Studies,” *Journal of Black Studies* 36, no. 5 (May 2006): 5.

[9] Rabaka, “The Souls of Black Radical Folk,” 5.

[10] Manning Marable, *W. E. B. du Bois: Black Radical Democrat* (Oxfordshire, UK: Taylor & Francis Group, 1987), 52, ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=4186359.

Colored People in 1910, Washington dominate(d) Afro-American political and economic life."[11]

> Booker T. Washington, educator, reformer, and the most influential black leader of his time (1856-1915) preached a philosophy of self-help, racial solidarity, and accommodation. He urged blacks to accept discrimination for the time being and concentrate on elevating themselves through hard work and material prosperity.[12]
>
> He believed in education in the crafts, industrial and farming skills, and the cultivation of the virtues of patience, enterprise, and thrift. This, he said, would win the respect of whites and lead to African Americans being fully accepted as citizens and integrated into all strata of society.[13]

Garvey and his Pan-Africanism Movement, though it seemed exclusionary, were very inclusive of people from the African Diaspora, particularly African Americans moving back to Africa.

Eboni K. Williams, as she hearkens back to her undergraduate days at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Black studies classes, states, "It was there in those class rooms that I learned about activist Marcus Garvey and his UNIA and his Pan-African ideas around liberation."[14] Williams continues, "Garvey believed in a perfect world, the US Government would have sent the formerly enslaved Africans back to Africa, because he like most smart people at the time, knew there was no real plan for Black folks to live in America as fully liberated first-class citizens."[15] Williams persist in saying,

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[11] Marable, *W. E. B. du Bois: Black Radical Democrat*, 52.

[12] Frontline, from the archives, "The Debate Between W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington," Published alongside the film "The Two Nations of Black America," aired on February 10, 1998.

[13] Frontline, from the archives, "The Debate Between W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington," Published alongside the film "The Two Nations of Black America," aired on February 10, 1998.

[14] Eboni K. Williams, *The Grio News*, Season 1, Episode 64, Recorded 2/22/23, 5:00pm.

[15] Eboni K. Williams, *The Grio News*, Season 1, Episode 64, Recorded 2/22/23, 5:00pm.

> Garvey essentially believed that since we were not sent back to our homeland, that we should gather our resources, connect our economics, and we should send ourselves back to Africa under our own power, and from 1820 to 1865 anywhere from eleven thousand to sixteen thousand freed Black Americans opted to do just that. They moved from America to the African nation of Liberia.[16]

Perhaps this was Garvey's way of reconciling Black Americans with Africans, the nation, and the people through what could be viewed as Black Nationalism, a movement since the 1850s. Manning Marable explains Black Nationalism in these words,

> a rejection of racial integration; a desire to develop all-black socio-economic institutions; an affinity for the culture and political heritage of black Africa; a commitment to create all-black political structures to fight against white racism; a deep reluctance to participate in coalitions which involved a white majority; the advocacy of armed self-defense of the black community; and in religion and culture, an ethos and spirituality which consciously rejected the imposition of white western dogmas.[17]

Marable continues, "Marcus Garvey was only one of a great tradition of black leaders who expressed that nationalistic tendency and developed a political program which won the support of millions of advocates. By the 1950s, Garveyism had long since disappeared from the black urban North, except in a handful of ghetto communities.[18]

Yet the vision of Garveyites remained long after their institutions had crumbled. Many blacks could clearly separate the fight for desegregation from a NAACP-prompted policy which might lead to the eventual cultural and ethnic extinction of their national minority group.[19] Black nationalist of the post-war era were both anti-racist and anti-

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[16] Eboni K. Williams, *The Grio News*, Season 1, Episode 64, Recorded 2/22/23, 5:00 pm.

[17] Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 53.

[18] Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 53.

[19] Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 53.

integrationist in the since that they opposed Jim Crow laws and simultaneously advocated all-black economic, political, and social institutions.[20]

One of the most influential Black voices for the freedom of Black people in America was a mid-twentieth-century prophet, Malcolm X, whose parents were Garveyites. In X's monumental speech at King Solomon Baptist Church, Detroit, Michigan (April 12, 1964), X speaks about the importance of Black Nationalism through the lens of political, economic, and social empowerment and freedom. X states, "I'm a Black Nationalist freedom fighter. Though Islam is my religious philosophy, my political, economic, and social philosophy is Black Nationalism. The political philosophy of Black Nationalism only means that the black man should control the politics and the politicians in his own community."[21] X continues,

> The political . . . the economic philosophy of black nationalism only means that we have to become involved in a program of reeducation, to educate our people into the importance of knowing that when you spend your dollar out of the community in which you live, the community in which you spend your money becomes richer and richer, the community out of which you take your money becomes poorer and poorer.[22]

X goes on to say, "And because these Negroes, who have been misled, misguided, . . .the Man is becoming richer and richer, and you're becoming poorer and poorer . . .then . . . . The community in which you live becomes a slum."[23] X goes on, "It

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[20] Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 53.

[21] Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet," King Solomon Baptist Church, Detroit, Michigan - April 12, 1964.

[22] Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet," King Solomon Baptist Church, Detroit, Michigan - April 12, 1964.

[23] Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet," King Solomon Baptist Church, Detroit, Michigan - April 12, 1964.

becomes a ghetto. The conditions become rundown. And then you have the audacity to complain about poor housing in a rundown community, while you're running down yourselves when you take your dollar out."[24]

"W.E.B. Du Bois, a towering black intellectual, scholar and political thinker (1868-1963) said no. Washington's strategy would serve only to perpetuate white oppression."[25] "Du Bois advocated political action and a civil rights agenda, (he helped found the NAACP). In addition, he argued that social change could be accomplished by developing the small group of college-educated blacks he called 'the Talented Tenth.'"[26]

These three 19th and 20th-century prominent Black leaders and intellectuals, Du Bois, Garvey, and Washington, had strategic disagreements for advancing African Americans' economic, political, and social progression, and the road toward Black and white relations. Yet, they both sought to end racial oppression and social injustice. In addition, because of their love for Black humanity, they needed to set aside their own personal thoughts for the benefit of Black Americans.

> Through late 1903, Washington continued to plan his secret reconciliation conference, which was scheduled at New York's Carnegie Hall on 6-8 January 1904. He deliberately gave Du Bois the impression that all major factions within the black community would be represented. 'We must make an especial effort to drop out of consideration all personal feelings.' Washington wrote Du Bois, 'otherwise the conference will be a failure from the beginning.'[27]

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[24] Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet," King Solomon Baptist Church, Detroit, Michigan, April 12, 1964.

[25] Frontline, from the archives, "The Debate Between W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington," Published alongside the film "The Two Nations of Black America," aired on February 10, 1998.

[26] Frontline, from the archives, "The Debate Between W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington," Published alongside the film "The Two Nations of Black America," aired on February 10, 1998.

[27] Manning, *W. E. B. du Bois,* 52-53.

Michael Rudolph West writes, "When he died, He was a paragon, they said, an inspiration, and the embodiment of 'the true Christian spirit.'" He "stood in the most delicate position of any man on the American Continent, be he black or white."[28] West article continues, "one speaker said, seeking ever to maintain peace and unity and friendship between the two races." He gained a hearing with presidents and other powerful men, not chasing down spoils or other partisan advantage, but on the march for harmony and progress for all. "Not some men down," one speaker said, quoting Lowell, "but all men up."[29] West continues, "The final speaker best captured the sentiments of the day and the audience's sense of their fallen leader: 'he has given us a vision which we may have with us every day, a vision of a new America of racial harmony as brilliant as the setting sun shining through a circle of clouds at the very tip top of a mountain.'"[30]

Michael West asserts, "In the summer of 1905, twenty-nine black men from across the United States gather on the Canadian side of the Niagara Falls to formulate and advance a program of radical protest to counter what they saw as Booker T. Washington's harmful program of accommodation."[31] West continues, "This meeting gave birth to an organized movement that would have a dynamic impact on the tone and temper of Black Americans' struggles to manifest social and political equality throughout the 20th century. As the leaders, W.E.B. Dubois and William Monroe Trotter drafted the

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[28] Michael Rudolph West, *The Education of Booker T. Washington: American Democracy and the Idea of Race Relations* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2006), 23–60, JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/west13048.5.

[29] West, *The Education of Booker T. Washington*, 23-24.

[30] West, *The Education of Booker T. Washington*, 24.

[31] Michael Rudolph West, "The Niagara Movement," *Black History Bulletin* 68, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2005): 21.

Niagara Movement's Declaration of Principles."[32] For any movement to be successful, Du Bois and Trotter knew the Niagara Movement needed to stand by a set of crucial principles and beliefs.

> We believe that this class of American citizens should protest empathically and continually against the curtailment of their political rights. We believe in manhood suffrage, we believe that no man is so good, intelligent, or wealthy as to be entrusted wholly with the welfare of his neighbor.[33]

Although, at this time in history, there was some improvement of Black lives. Du Bois and many other Black people had progressed in wisdom and intelligence, acquired property, were well dressed and classy, prospered religiously, economically and in educational institutions. Even though, Dubois and Trotter witnessed such advancement, they also recognized the need to add to their principles.

> We believe also in the protest against the curtailment of our civil rights. All American citizens have the right to equal treatment in places of public entertainment according to their behavior and deserts.[34]

One of the major complaints against America was her denial toward economic prosperity for Black people. Therefore, within the movements Declaration of Principles, it was crucial to state, "We especially complain against the denial of equal opportunities to us in economic life; in the rural districts of the south this amounts to peonage and virtual slavery; all over the south it tends to crush labor and small businesses

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[32] Michael Rudolph West, "The Niagara Movement," *Black History Bulletin* 68, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2005): 21.

[33] Michael Rudolph West, "The Niagara Movement,", *Black History Bulletin* 68, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2005): 21.

[34] Michael Rudolph West, "The Niagara Movement,", *Black History Bulletin* 68, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2005): 21.

enterprises."[35] "Everywhere American prejudice, helped often by iniquitous laws, is making it more difficult for Negro Americans to earn a decent living."[36] Principles involving education was of the utmost importance as well. "Common school education should be free to all American children and compulsory. High school training should be adequately provided for all, and college training should be the monopoly of no class or race in any section of our common country."[37] "We believe that in defense of its own institutions, the United States should aid common school education, particularly in the south, and we especially recommend concerted agitation. We urge an increase in public high school facilities in the South, where the Negro-Americans are almost wholly without such provisions."

The concern to have access to quality education continues. "We favor well-equipped trade and technical schools for the training of artisans, and the need of adequate and liberal endowment for a few institutions of higher education must be patent to sincere well-wishes of the race."[38] Also included in the movement's Declaration of Principles are issues surrounding politics, healthcare, classism, and racism.

> We demand upright judges in the courts, juries selected without discrimination on account of color . . . the same measure of punishment and the same efforts at reformation for blacks as for white offenders. Orphanages and farm schools for

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[35] Michael Rudolph West, "The Niagara Movement,", *Black History Bulletin* 68, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2005): 21.

[36] Michael Rudolph West, "The Niagara Movement,", *Black History Bulletin* 68, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2005): 21.

[37] Michael Rudolph West, "The Niagara Movement,", *Black History Bulletin* 68, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2005): 21.

[38] Michael Rudolph West, "The Niagara Movement,", *Black History Bulletin* 68, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2005): 21.

> dependent children, juvenile reformatories for delinquents, and the abolish[ment] of the dehumanizing convict-leasing system.[39]

There are many principles that are not mentioned in this paper up to this point; however, I will address some of them later.

The Niagara Movement

Meanwhile, I will turn now to an article written by Robert W. Williams. Williams writes, "The Niagara Movement, when created in 1905, was intended to establish a nationwide organization to oppose racial discrimination and to promote its own specific goals and strategies for racial uplift. By so doing, it directly challenged the leadership of Booker T. Washington. At the second meeting of the Niagara Movement in 1906 at Harpers Ferry, W.E.B. Du Bois wrote the 'Address to the Country'(ATTC) and 'Address to the Nation.'" [40] The Address" articulated a set of demands for political and civil rights, and also called for congressional intervention to secure those demands."[41] Williams spoke of the natural rights for all of God's children created in God's image. Williams's asserted, "In the history of U.S. political thought on rights, one major perspective holds that natural rights are not given by government, but rather are conferred by a divine power. Natural rights pre-exist government."[42] "In the social contract

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[39] Michael Rudolph West, "The Niagara Movement,", *Black History Bulletin* 68, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2005): 21.

[40] Robert W. Williams, "W.E.B. DuBois: The Niagara Movement's 'Declaration of Principles,'" 21-23, jstor, http:www/jstor.org/stable24759630.

[41] Robert W. Williams, "W.E.B. DuBois: The Niagara Movement's 'Declaration of Principles,'" 21-23, jstor, http:www/jstor.org/stable24759630.

[42] Robert W. Williams, "W.E.B. DuBois: The Niagara Movement's 'Declaration of Principles,'" 21-23, jstor, http:www/jstor.org/stable24759630.

tradition of political thought, governments are designed and created to protect those natural rights and the subsidiary but still important rights called positive rights. Various political movements within U.S. history, including those seeking rights for women and persons of color, have used the language of natural rights."[43] "The Declaration of Independence is of course the *locus classicus* for the articulation of natural rights in the U.S.A. — a point made by the free African American Benjamin Banneker when he referred to slavery as a denial of basic rights in a 1791 letter to Thomas Jefferson."[44]

Sociologist Angela Jones writes in her dissertation, "The Niagara Movement (1905-1910) legacy is neglected, the movement flippantly reduced to being the inconsequential precursor of the NAACP or a superficial organization created by the idealist W. E. B. Du Bois."[45] Jones continues, "In reality, the Niagara Movement, although short-lived, was not a failure. It was a success because it made the need to annihilate Jim Crow and the need to address the atrocities caused by slavery publicly visible."[46] In addition, "The turn of the twentieth century [saw] marginalized African Americans carved out new public space for the purposes of discussing the struggle against Jim Crow and the limitations of American democracy. The creation of new black publics led to the debates and discussions that set the stage for twentieth century black

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[43] Robert W. Williams, "W.E.B. DuBois: The Niagara Movement's 'Declaration of Principles,'" 21-23, jstor, http:www/jstor.org/stable24759630.

[44] Robert W. Williams, "W.E.B. DuBois: The Niagara Movement's 'Declaration of Principles,'" 21-23, jstor.http:www/jstor.org/stable24759630.

[45] Angela Jones, "The Niagara Movement (1905-1910)," Dissertation Publishing, UMI 3396662 Copyright 2010 by ProQuest LLC, 1.

[46] Angela Jones, "The Niagara Movement (1905-1910)," Dissertation Publishing, UMI 3396662 Copyright 2010 by ProQuest LLC, 1.

protest."[47] "The Niagara Movement revealed new insight into the history of the Civil Rights Movement and examines talk and public discussion as an understudied resource for mobilization."[48]

To that point about the Civil Rights Movement (CRM), Barber writes about his learning firsthand of the power of standing together.[49] Barber states,

> In the mid-twentieth century, it looked like the system of Jim Crow had built a fortress around segregation in the South; but when Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King and Bayard Rustin got together with Glen Smiley and Abraham Joshua Heschel and Viola Liuzzo, they tore down segregation and showed America a better way.[50]

Barber continues, "History showed me that what the Bible says is true: when we all get together, something powerful can happen."[51]

Davis continues, "The history of the Niagara Movement is reductive; one might be led to believe that Du Bois was the sole creator and controller. The many male and female members of the Niagara Movement were responsible for establishing an integrationist platform and helped legitimize a plan of action for fighting Jim Crow."[52] "The Niagara Movement was an all-black civil rights organization that enabled major social change. It transformed the black public sphere by vocalizing a radical platform to

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[47] Angela Jones, "The Niagara Movement (1905-1910)," Dissertation Publishing, UMI 3396662 Copyright 2010 by ProQuest LLC, 1.

[48] Angela Jones, "The Niagara Movement (1905-1910)," Dissertation Publishing, UMI 3396662 Copyright 2010 by ProQuest LLC, 1.

[49] Barber, ll and Hartgrove, *The Third Reconstruction,* 34.

[50] Barber, ll and Hartgrove, *The Third Reconstruction,* 35.

[51] Barber, ll and Hartgrove, *The Third Reconstruction,* 35.

[52] Angela Jones, "The Niagara Movement (1905-1910)," Dissertation Publishing, UMI 3396662 Copyright 2010 by ProQuest LLC, 6.

end Jim Crow and by assisting in the proliferation of the burgeoning black press."[53] "Niagara strategically utilized public racial conflicts to make racial injustice a public issue. The Niagara Movement helped transform a new black public sphere in which it attempted to force a discussion of race within American society during the Progressive Era."[54]

Davis recounts the Niagara Movements first meeting. "From July 11th–13th of 1905, at the Erie Beach Hotel in Fort Erie Ontario, the Niagara Movement held its first meeting. Fifty-nine men representing eighteen states were sent invitations to this first meeting. The invitation said, 'the conference hopes to combine business with healthful recreation and social intercourse."[55] Jones continues, "The Niagara Movement's goals were to fight Jim Crow laws and racial injustice but also to build African American social networks. Women were not invited to the first meeting. However, Niagara's position on women radically changed within the next year."[56]

> The Niagara Movement began with twenty-nine members. By the close of 1908, its membership reached four hundred-and-fifty. Thereafter, Niagara membership dwindled, and many members joined the NAACP, the National Equal Rights League, and/or the National Negro Political League. The Niagara Movement was the precursor to the NAACP and assisted in the development of the already nascent Civil Rights Movement.[57]

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[53] Angela Jones, "The Niagara Movement (1905-1910)," Dissertation Publishing, UMI 3396662 Copyright 2010 by ProQuest LLC, 33.

[54] Angela Jones, "The Niagara Movement (1905-1910)," Dissertation Publishing, UMI 3396662 Copyright 2010 by ProQuest LLC, 33.

[55]Angela Jones, "The Niagara Movement (1905-1910)," Dissertation Publishing, UMI 3396662 Copyright 2010 by ProQuest LLC, 33-34.

[56] Angela Jones, "The Niagara Movement (1905-1910)," Dissertation Publishing, UMI 3396662 Copyright 2010 by ProQuest LLC, 34.

[57] Angela Jones, "The Niagara Movement (1905-1910)," Dissertation Publishing, UMI 3396662 Copyright 2010 by ProQuest LLC, 34.

"Membership 1905-1908; July 1905, 29 members, September 1905, 64 members, October 1905, 75 members, December 1905, 150 members, June 1906, 170 members, April 1907, 380 members, and September 1908, 450 members."[58]

Like most established organizations, The Niagara movement leadership created a democratic structure. Jones states, "The attending members of the first conference created a constitution and by-laws for The Niagara Movement…a definitive national structure; they created…positions such as general secretary, treasurer, and an executive committee of which there was at least one representative from each of the fourteen states represented at the conference."[59] "The constitution also established the following committees: Finance, Interstate Conditions and Needs, Organization, Civil and Political Rights, Legal Defense, Crime, Rescue and Reform, Economic Opportunity, Health, Education, and Press & Public Opinion…the respective secretaries of these committees, in conjunction with the general secretary, voted for members of these committees."[60]

> The Niagara Movement strove to find solutions to the problems of suffrage, civil liberty, economic opportunity, quality education, justice in the courts, a public opinion free from racist sentiment, proper healthcare, unionization, freedom to protest, an end to the "Jim Crow Car," fair treatment of Black soldiers, ensuring Congress sees to the enforcement of its Amendments, removal of racism from the church, agitation, and help from Americans from all walks of life.[61]

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[58] Angela Jones, "The Niagara Movement (1905-1910)," Dissertation Publishing, UMI 3396662 Copyright 2010 by ProQuest LLC, 34.

[59] Angela Jones, "The Niagara Movement (1905-1910)," Dissertation Publishing, UMI 3396662 Copyright 2010 by ProQuest LLC, 34-35.

[60] Angela Jones, "The Niagara Movement (1905-1910)," Dissertation Publishing, UMI 3396662 Copyright 2010 by ProQuest LLC, 35.

[61] Angela Jones, "The Niagara Movement (1905-1910)," Dissertation Publishing, UMI 3396662 Copyright 2010 by ProQuest LLC, 35.

Also, "it discussed the need to impress upon the African American community the following duties: to vote, to respect the rights of others, to work, to obey the laws, to be clean and orderly, to send our children to school, and to respect ourselves, even as we respect others."[62] In addition, "The Declaration of Principles reflected both the integrationist platform and the prescriptions of duties also highlights their efforts to create a new African American moral code."[63]

Howard R. Rabinowitz states, "Radical Reconstruction on race relations can benefit from attention to events on the local scene. The decisions made in Congress and the state legislatures had to be implemented on the local level and it was there that the tension between law and custom was most evident."[64] Rabinowitz continues,

> By illuminating the policies of Reconstruction and Redemption as they touched the lives of people, details can be provided to fill in gaps or to correct misconceptions in the broader interpretations of the era. There are many topics in need of examination, among them the relationship between white Radicals and their black allies, the attitudes of white Democrats towards Negro voters, and the quality of government provided by the Radicals.[65]

According to Elliott M. Rudwick, these were the list of demands of the Niagara Movement:

> 1. Freedom of speech and criticism. The fluid exchange of ideas was crucial to the Tenth, who refused to be pressured into silence by the Washingtonians. 2. An unfettered and unsubsidized press. Unless their own propaganda reached and aroused the people, the Radicals contended that the Negroes would remain a captive race. The charge that the press was bought and controlled served as a solid rallying point. 3. Manhood suffrage. The conferees desired to participate in the

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[62] Angela Jones, "The Niagara Movement (1905-1910)," Dissertation Publishing, UMI 3396662 Copyright 2010 by ProQuest LLC, 35-36.

[63] Angela Jones, "The Niagara Movement (1905-1910)," Dissertation Publishing, UMI 3396662 Copyright 2010 by ProQuest LLC, 36.

[64] Howard R. Rabinowitz, "From Reconstruction to Redemption in the Urban South," *Journal of Urban History* 2, no. 2 (February 1976): 169

[65] Rabinowitz, "From Reconstruction to Redemption in the Urban South," 169-170.

> American political system (North and South) on the same basis as the whites. The very term, 'Afro-American,' was repudiated because of its alien connotation and 'Negro American' became the designation which was approved by the delegates. (Their dislike of the term may also have been caused by its association with the Tuskegeean Afro-American Council.) 4. The abolition of all caste distinctions based simply on race and color-Racism was denounced as 'unreasoning human savagery,' and Jim Crow was condemned as an avenue for insult as well as a crucifixion of manhood.[66]

The list continues,

> 5. The recognition of the principles of human brotherhood as a practical present creed. Du Bois considered that the Niagara Movement's task was to interpret the real Christ to white 'Christians.' 6. Recognition of the highest and best human training as a monopoly of no class or race. The Niagara men believed in universal common school education; high school and technical-high school were to be available to those who wanted them. They proposed that a small number of colleges should be maintained for those who could profit from them. Federal aid to education was advocated. 7. A belief in the dignity of labor. The Niagara Movement asserted that Negroes must have equal employment opportunities. Employers and trade unions were severely criticized for racial discrimination. Peonage was denounced. 8. United effort to realize these ideals under wise and courageous leadership-Constant protest was the approved method to secure Negro rights. The Outlook denied that race prejudice was increasing and repudiated the anti-segregation stand of the Niagara men.
>
> The Niagara Movement was a mechanism for white radicals as Black allies.

Kami Fletcher writes, "The Niagara Movement…a new dawning of a black social movement era . . .comprised of educated black citizens who publicly and unapologetically pointed to white America as the cause of black citizens' plight…the Niagara Movement greatly influenced the structure of subsequent black social movements largely through its current form, the NAACP."[67] Although the Niagara Movement was pivotal for Black folks and offered a way forward for the relationship

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[66] Elliott M. Rudwick, "The Niagara Movement," *The Journal of Negro History* 42, no. 3 (1957): 177–200, https://doi.org/10.2307/2715936.

[67] Kami Fletcher, *The Niagara Movement: The Black Protest Reborn* (Denton, TX: VDM Verlag, 2006), 41.

with white people, the movement had its shortcoming, particularly regarding women. Fletcher also provides a critique of The Niagara Movement and its sexist issues.

"Although viewed by scholars to have been beneficial to the vast majority of U.S. blacks, the Niagara Movement was only partially effective due to its elitist, patriarchal, and sexist structure. This structure-which consisted of twenty-nine core members, eight constitutional principles, and five demands-outlines the narrow and male-centered composition."[68] Fletcher continues,

> Its members were all of prominent social status, college educated, and wealthy black men. The eight constitutional principles reflect their privilege centering on uncensored publishing rights and adequate job choices for U.S. blacks. The Niagara Movement's five demands, which centered on the goal of fighting against racial discrimination and for racial integration, portrayed key themes of manhood and oppressive gender ideology resulting in the exclusion of black women.[69]

Fletcher continues with her opinion of why the Niagara Movement was not advantageous for all Black people when she says, "The social status of the Niagara Movement members was the first key reason why the Movement was not greatly beneficial to most U.S. black citizens. The Niagara men's elite status not only made them narrow-minded but rendered them out-of-touch with the main issues facing…vast majority of U.S. blacks."[70] In addition,

> Niagara Movement members believed that college education would end the social oppression of U.S. blacks, thus ignoring the issues of most black citizens. A generation removed from slavery, black citizens were in dire economic situations and more worried about eating, acquiring shelter, and finding a job than obtaining a college education.[71]

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[68] Fletcher, *The Niagara Movement*,13.

[69] Fletcher, *The Niagara Movement,* 13.

[70] Fletcher, *The Niagara Movement,* 13.

[71] Fletcher, *The Niagara Movement,* 13.

Fletcher continues to give another critique of the Niagara Movement's shortcomings. Fletcher states, "The second key reason why the Niagara Movement was not greatly beneficial to most U.S. black citizens was due to the themes of manhood and oppressive gender ideology…Manhood, which resulted in oppressive gender ideology, was an underlying theme specifically illustrated throughout the Movement's five demands."[72] Fletcher continues and argues, "This theme requires men to be strong protectors of women while simultaneously requiring women to be weak and subservient victims unable to aid in their own protection. Niagara Movement members wanted the larger white society to acknowledge them as men."[73] As Fletcher continues her analysis of the Niagara Movement she writes, "the Niagara Movement served as only the possibility for the dawning of a new era of black social movements. The Niagara Movement's sexist structure was passed on to the NAACP…adopted by the Civil Rights Movement. This shared structure normalized patriarchy, sexism, and gender exclusion/marginalization within black social movements."[74]

Fletcher continues,

> However, there are still lessons that can be learned from the mistakes of the Niagara Movement… I acknowledge that I am at the long line of many courageous black women who called for an inclusive and adequately representative black social movement structure. It is important to first acknowledge their call for inclusion as well as their attempts at restructuring black social movements.[75]

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[72] Fletcher, *The Niagara Movement,* 15.

[73] Fletcher, *The Niagara Movement,* 15

[74] Fletcher, *The Niagara Movement,* 42.

[75] Fletcher, *The Niagara Movement,* 42.

Gary Dorrien offers an interesting lens of the Niagara Movement and its relationship to the Social Gospel and the Civil Rights Movement. Dorrien in his critique of the Social Gospel writes, "the name »civil rights movement« is usually reserved for the movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and most scholars have ignored the black social gospel that supported civil rights activism in all three of its historic phases, struggled for a place in the black churches."[76] Dorrien continues, "There was a black tradition of the social gospel that gave leaders and ballast to the civil rights movement. It provided much of the movement's intellectual underpinning. It built upon affirmations about human dignity and divine justice that most black churches proclaimed, but distinctly."[77]

Dorrien's assessment asked crucial questions as well, "It began and was defined by a terrible, unavoidable question: What would a new abolition be? Now that abolition has come and gone, how should churches respond to this epidemic of hostility and racial terrorism?"[78]

Dorrien continues,

> The black church ministers who were compelled to ask these questions shared important things with the famous social gospel of their time, the white one. The white social gospel is justly renowned. It put social justice on the agenda of the white mainline churches. It created the ecumenical movement and the Federal Council of Churches. It created the field of social ethics and established liberal theology in this country. It founded the peace and justice organizations that still operate in mainline denominations. It was the greatest wave of social justice activism ever generated by the ecumenical churches. But the greatest legacy of the social gospel is not the one recounted in books about Walter Rauschenbusch,

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[76] Gary Dorrien, "The New Abolition: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Black Social Gospel," *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte: Internationale Zeitschrift Für Theologie Und Geschichtswissenschaft* 33, no. 1 (2020): 89–102, doi:10.13109/kize.2020.33.1.89.

[77] Dorrien, "The New Abolition: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Black Social Gospel," 89.

[78] Dorrien, "The New Abolition: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Black Social Gospel," 89.

> Washington Gladden, Jane Addams, Francis Greenwood Peabody, Harry Ward, the Federal Council of Churches, John Ryan, and all that.[79]

As Dorrien relates the black social gospel and the Niagara Movement by speaking of W. E. B. Du Bois he states, "No tradition in American religious history has a greater legacy than the black social gospel. Yet this tradition was ignored for decades and it lacked almost any literature until recently. Numerous conventions have long kept it from being remembered. Supposedly, there was no black social gospel worth noting."[80] Dorrien continues, "It had only a few proponents, who had no impact. Black churches were too provincial and conservative to support social justice politics and social gospel theology. Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois were not involved with the social gospel…this category does not illuminate Washington versus Du Bois."[81]

Dorrien's assessment also addresses the shortcomings of the social gospel's absence of racial equity. Dorrien writes, "Religious intellectuals no longer mattered…so it doesn't matter if we ignore whatever black religious intellectuals might have existed. Reinhold Niebuhr shredded the social gospel, so forget the social gospel. And the social gospel movement that did exist – the white one – did not concern itself with racial justice."[82] Dorrien continues,

> The early black social gospel had extraordinary proponents . . . William Simmons, Alexander Crummell, Reverdy Ransom, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Alexander Walters, Nannie Burroughs, Richard R. Wright, Jr., and Adam Clayton Powell Sr. They were an embattled minority in their denominations . . . the social gospel was divisive . . . it threatened to get people in trouble.[83]

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[79] Dorrien, "The New Abolition: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Black Social Gospel," 90.

[80] Dorrien, "The New Abolition: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Black Social Gospel," 90.

[81] Dorrien, "The New Abolition: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Black Social Gospel," 90.

[82] Dorrien, "The New Abolition: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Black Social Gospel," 90.

[83] Dorrien, "The New Abolition: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Black Social Gospel," 90.

Dorrien continues, "The founders and their successors fought hard for the right to advocate progressive theology and social justice politics. Washington versus Du Bois was at the center of the argument, until the Du Bois faction prevailed."[84]

Conclusion

The three iconic figures – W. E. B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, and Marcus Garvey – had different ideas and pathways to racial equity for Blacks in America, which was motivated by their love for Black people, as Black people were transitioning from enslavement to freedom. These prominent figures sought racial justice, where the social gospel fell short. Marvin A. McMickle wrote, "Even the voices that were so outspoken on other forms of social injustice were silent when it came to racism and the rights for African Americans . . . Walter Rauschenbusch is credited with shaping what came to be called the social gospel."[85] McMickle continues, "Beginning with his ministry among the impoverished immigrants in the so-called Hell's Kitchen section of New York City, Rauschenbusch argued passionately and persuasively that the gospel message demanded justice for people impacted by poverty. Yet, by his own confession he never expressed any concern about people impacted by racism."[86]

James Cone writes in his remarkable book, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, "Walter Rauschenbusch, the Social Gospel movement's greatest theologian, expressed his frustration: 'For years the problem of the two races seemed to me so tragic, so

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[84] Dorrien, "The New Abolition: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Black Social Gospel," 90.

[85] Marvin A. McMickle, *Let the Oppressed Go Free: Exploring Theologies of Liberation* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2020), 27.

[86] McMickle, *Let the Oppressed Go Free,* 27.

insoluble that I have never yet ventured to discuss it in public.'"[87] Cone continues, "The Social Gospel advocates held conferences on the status of the Negro in Mohonk, New York, in 1890 and 1891 and felt no need to invite any blacks, because, as Lyman Abbott said, 'A patient is not invited to the consultation of the doctors on his case.'"[88] McMickle quoting Cone states, "White theologians and ministers . . . were silent, as if the meaning of the Christian gospel had nothing to do with segregation and lynching . . . every white theologian dating back to Jonathan Edwards in the mid-eighteenth century, "None of America's greatest theologians made the rejection of white supremacy central to their understanding of the gospel."[89]

During the postbellum period, Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois may have been on opposite sides for freedom; however, they were integral pioneers, as well as Garvey, for the advancement for equitable Black white relations. W. E. B. Du Bois and the Niagara Movement did not last very long; however, it laid a foundation for future crucial social movements. Regardless of all the hostility, animosity, and hatred Black Americans have faced throughout American history, rather than respond with the same visceral attacks, hate, or hostility, Black people such as Harriett Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglas, Ida B. Wells Barnett, Booker T. Washington, Marcus Garvey, and W.E.B. Du Bois sought the higher ground of righteousness and justice that does not respond with violence or hateful ways, but through a social ethic. Like Micah, an antebellum prophet and voice of God, that said, "He has told you, O mortal, what is good;

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[87] James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 62.

[88] Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 62.

[89] McMickle, *Let the Oppressed Go Free*, 27.

and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"[90]

The prophetic work of W. E.B. Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, and Marcus Garvey lives on in the hearts and collective consciousness of many individuals. Their contributions to American society, as prototypes and catalysts, must be remembered. They were instrumental in the birth of The National Association for the Advancement of Color People (NAACP), the Women's Political Council (WPC), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), — all integral parts of the Civil Rights Movement (CRM).

Today, contemporary organizations such as The Poor Peoples Campaign led by Reverend Doctor William J. Barber ll, and Reverend Doctor Liz Theoharis, and the Black Lives Matter (BLM), which started with four queer women, are carrying forward the legacy of resistance. These organizations and their leaders, standing on the shoulders of Garvey, Washington, and Du Bois, demonstrated and continue to demonstrate the power when humanity comes together across racial/ethnic, cultural, and generational lines. As I move to the theological foundations segment of this thesis, I invite you to join me in this crucial work. The theological insights to be considered are not just for faith leaders, for the spirit of the Lord can move wherever she wants, but for all of us serious about racial healing through kinship and conciliation to atonement.

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[90] Mi 6:8, NRSV, 1247.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Throughout my higher educational journey, I have been inspired, encouraged, and empowered by reading the biblical text through a fresh lens without the influence of a Europeanized view of the sacred text. As I continue to read scripture through a liberationist lens and read the scholarship of liberationists and abolitionists, I am even more encouraged and empowered by the ancestors who live through me. While on a cohort international trip to Ghana, Africa, one of the most meaningful tours was visiting the Elmina Enslavement Castle. In the words of our tour guide person, "We believe in reincarnation, in the sense that our ancestors are living through us."[1] The power of the ancestors also rekindles me despite how African Americans have been, and continue to be, treated in the so-called United States of America. The hate and the visceral hostility that this country had in many forms – and still has today – against Black bodies has not been reciprocated with the same type of hate and hostility by people of dark skin. Instead, Black people reacted with the tradition of resistance. Black people continue to produce freedom fighters, liberationists, and abolitionists.

[1] Tour guide person, Elmina Castle, Monday September 10, 2022.

In this chapter, I highlighted historical and generational power within Black people that do not respond to people, particularly white people, who are plagued with schadenfreude — those who get or take pleasure out of the pain and sufferings of Black people, or people in general. I will explore the spirit of freedom fighters, liberationist, abolitionist, and the theology of kindomship.

Theological Theme

Albert J. Raboteau placed a beautiful poem written by Birago Diop to start his book *Slave Religion, The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*. Here's a portion of the poem:

> Those who are dead are never gone: They are there in the thickening shadow. The dead are not under the earth: they are in the tree that rustles, they are in the wood that groans, they are in the water that runs, they are in the water that sleeps, they are in the hut, they are in the crowd, the dead are not dead. Those who are dead are never gone, they are in the breast of the women, they are in the child who is wailing, and in the firebrand that flames. The dead are not under the earth: they are in the fire that is dying, they are in the grasses that weep, they are in the whimpering rocks, they are in the forest, they are in the house, the dead are not dead.[2]

Inspired by Haitian ancestry, and the Haitian Revolution, I am starting with an eighteenth-century abolitionist, liberationist, and rebellious freedom fighter, Mr. Sam Sharpe. In the book, *Black Theology, Slavery, and Contemporary Christianity*, Delroy A. Reid-Salmon writes, "After the Haitian Revolution of 1791-1803, the Sam Sharpe Rebellion or Baptist War of 1831-1832 in Jamaica can be considered the single greatest

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[2] Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*, Updated ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 3.

strike of resistance that led to the abolition of the institution and practice of slavery in the Black Atlantic world."[3] Reid-Salmon continues,

> Sam Sharpe, who through his rebellion, undermined the social, political, moral, and theological foundations of Euro-American hegemony . . . through his execution, he symbolizes a Christic and liberative figure who pays the ultimate price for the Divine gift of liberation. As such, the execution of Sam Sharpe, as a result of the rebellion he led in 1831- 1832, serves both as a source and as paradigm for Black theological discourse."[4]

Who is Mr. Sam Sharpe? What was the source of his faith, and what was the optic of his faith? Reid-Salmon writes,

> Sam Sharpe believed and based the pursuit for freedom on his faith in the emancipatory purpose of Jesus Christ whom he used as a source of power, and a theological framework in the quest for emancipation. Faith as a source of power is that dynamic, liberating, and transformative power of God that enables the oppressed to navigate life through the turbulent waters of despair and death and pursues human wholeness and affirms the ultimate triumph of God's purpose through Jesus Christ. Faith is also a theological framework that facilitates one's relationship with God and existential encounters of life. As such, Black faith is not mere rational belief or doctrinal statements, but rather, is a relational act that describes a way of life grounded on the promises of God in Jesus Christ.[5]

Reid-Salmon continues, "In this regard, the faith of the enslaved, out of which the Black faith originated, is essentially, fundamentally and definitely Christocentric."[6] Therefore, at the core of racial atonement in Christ, yet not just Christ, but Jesus the liberationist man who is also Christ. It will take radicality to be liberated from the idolatry of white supremacy. Reid-Salmon speaks of the radicalness of Sam Sharpe in these terms: "Inherent in the faith of Sam Sharpe are the two theological concepts of (1) equality of all

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[3] Delroy A. Reid-Salmon, "The Cost of Liberation," *Black Theology, Slavery and Contemporary Christianity*, ed. Anthony Reddie (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 151.

[4] Reid-Salmon, "The Cost of Liberation," 151.

[5] Reid-Salmon, "The Cost of Liberation," 151.

[6] Reid-Salmon, "The Cost of Liberation," 152.

persons and (2) the Divine gift of freedom for humanity through the liberating act of Jesus. These two concepts are constitutive elements of his radical faith."[7] Reid-Salmon continues, "It is the teaching of the particular sections of the Bible that all persons are equal (Acts 10:34). This equality for Sam Sharpe did not only apply to White people but to all people."[8] Reid-Salmon goes on to say, "While White supremacy denies the equality of all people and advocates Black inferiority to people with lighter pigmentation, and therefore, claims they are less than human beings, Sharpe rejected such view as erroneous and evil."[9]

Ancestor Sam Sharpe was an enslaved person who had no rights to read, but the radical spirit of God spoke. According to Reid-Salmon,

> Sam Sharpe, then, although we are not aware of the particular premise on which he based his claim, as a student of the Bible, it can be conjectured that he was aware that the Bible says that all persons are created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27) and all are made free by God through Jesus Christ (Gal 3:26-29). This claim of the equality of all persons was not only a challenge to the heresy of White superiority, but the assertion of a Black Christian theological anthropology. Thus, through the act of rebellion, Sharpe demonstrated his philosophy of the human being, which departed from the dominant philosophy of the day.[10]

While Mr. Sam Sharpe's rebellion was for Jamaicans, there were abolitionists in America. In his article, "The Bible Against American Slavery: Anglophone Transatlantic Evangelical Abolitionists' Use of Biblical Arguments, 1776-1865," Richard Rodriguez writes,

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[7] Reid-Salmon, "The Cost of Liberation," 152.

[8] Reid-Salmon, "The Cost of Liberation," 152.

[9] Reid-Salmon, "The Cost of Liberation," 152.

[10] Reid-Salmon, "The Cost of Liberation," 152.

"In 1812 George Bourne had been at Rockingham County, Virginia, leading the Presbyterian Church for about three years. The congregation, growing increasingly hostile to his critique of slavery, asked him to preach on the eighth commandment against stealing.

> His specific assignment was to apply the passage to the slaves who had been pilfering such items as poultry from their masters. Bourne . . . message first counseled the slaves against stealing chickens. But then he sent shockwaves throughout the congregation when he pivoted his attention to the masters among the congregants. To them he posed the question: If stealing chickens "was a sin, what did they think of stealing human beings from Africa who made were in the image of God? Which 'sin' was greater in their estimation?[11]

Rodriquez continues, "What, he further asked, did they think of 'stealing' humans from their families and communities in Africa simply because of the color of their skin? He also inquired what they thought of reselling the stolen human beings, and their children, within the American system of slavery."[12] Rodriquez speaks of the parishioners' reaction,

> The congregation's reaction was visceral. The countenances of his parishioners quickly hardened as anger swept over the congregation. Incensed congregants leaped to their feet and surrounded the young preacher after the service was over. Undaunted, the young antislavery firebrand neither recanted nor was silenced. Instead, he wrote and self-published his first book, *The Book and Slavery Irreconcilable*, detailing how slavery ran afoul of the scriptures.[13]

Rodriquez also speaks of the beginnings of white male abolitionist stating, "Most scholars agree that the American radical immediatist chapter of the abolitionist movement began in earnest during the early 1830s. At this time, the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS), the first American national abolitionist organization, was

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[11] Rodriquez, "The Bible Against American Slavery," 105.

[12] Rodriquez, "The Bible Against American Slavery," 105.

[13] Rodriquez, "The Bible Against American Slavery," 105.

established and William Lloyd Garrison emerged as the movement's iconic leader."[14] Rodriquez continues, "As early as 1812, Bourne preached, wrote, and stood against American slavery, called for its immediate abolition, and put forward a biblical framework and vocabulary that would be used twenty years later in the national call for the immediate end of American slavery . . . immediatism did not begin with him."[15] Rodriquez goes on to say, "Samuel Hopkins and Granville Sharp had called for the immediate end of slavery in 1776. But Bourne used a vocabulary of manstealing that would be applied to American slavery two decades later when the nineteenth-century national movement began in earnest."[16]

Now, what about the relationship between the Pauline Epistles, the African American experience, and the scriptures that can interpreted as an endorsement of enslavement? RA Burridge writes,

> The 'Biblical' case for slavery is clear: early in Genesis, Noah decrees that, as punishment for seeing him naked, Ham's descendants will be slaves for Shem and Japheth (Gn 9:22-27); Abraham is blessed by God with 'male and female slaves' as a wealthy slave-owner (Gn 24:35; for Abraham's slaves, see also Gn12:5; 14:14; 20:14). Slaves were part of his estate, property he passed onto his son Isaac (Gn 26:12-14). There is provision in the Mosaic legislation for Israelites to buy and sell slaves, and how to treat them (see e.g. Ex 21 and Lv 25).[17]

Burridge continues, "Slavery was equally accepted in the New Testament . . . slaves are told to 'obey their masters with enthusiasm' as though obeying Christ (Eph 6:5-9; Col 3:22-25; Tt 2:9-10; 1 Pt 18-19). Paul returns the runaway slave Onesimus to his master

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[14] Rodriquez, "The Bible Against American Slavery," 106.

[15] Rodriquez, "The Bible Against American Slavery," 106.

[16] Rodriquez, "The Bible Against American Slavery," 106.

[17] R. A. Burridge, "Being Biblical? Slavery, Sexuality, and the Inclusive Community," *HTS Theological Studies* 64, no. 1 (2008): 158.

Philemon and tells slaves to 'remain in the condition in which you were called' (Phlm12;1Cor7:20-24)."[18] In addition, "Particular attention was drawn to 1 Timothy 6:1-6: 'let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of all honour.' All of these texts were common in the Biblical justification for slavery in the early nineteenth-century."[19]

What do we do with such troublesome text, scriptures, sacred words, we believe come from GOD? In her article, "African American Readings of Paul: Reception, Resistance, and Transformation," Lisa M. Bowens writes,

> It is important to note the African American community is not monolithic. There is no one way that African Americans interpret and understand Paul; hence, the pluralization of 'hermeneutics.' The African American is diverse and multivalent, and Paul plays a significant role in African American reflection in the midst of all its diversity.[20]

Bowens continues, "African American Pauline hermeneutics – that is, the use and interpretation of Pauline Scripture by blacks – have impacted the religious thought and experience of many African Americans and have been employed by them to resist oppression and to protest dehumanization."[21] Bowens continues, "the narratives and autobiographies of the enslaved, readers will get a sense of these authors' precarious existences and catch glimpses into how some enslaved Africans weave Paul's writings

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[18] Burridge, "Being Biblical? Slavery, Sexuality, and the Inclusive Community," 159.

[19] Burridge, "Being Biblical? Slavery, Sexuality, and the Inclusive Community," 159.

[20] Lisa M. Bowens, *African American Readings of Paul: Reception, Resistance, and Transformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2020), 3, ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=6454423. Created from dtl on 2023-05-03 23:32:06.

[21] Bowens, *African American Readings of Paul,* 3.

into the fabric of their lives, how they weave him into their . . . stories, and how they weave him into their own contexts."[22] Bowens continues,

> In the depths of pain, sorrow, torture, and dehumanization, many African Americans reach for Paul's words, seize his language to give language to their own voices, and take up his writings to give meaning to their own horrid stories. The subsequent discussion will allow us, by glimpsing their lives, to understand how Paul fits into their realities, how they fit into Paul's story, and at the same time how they transform Pauline texts and make them their own.[23]

Many of these horrid stories of moral cruelty, physical brutality, and the violation against humanity are told and recorded. The narrative of Harriet Jacobs is written about an enslaved Black woman who escaped and became an abolitionist. To protect her identity and location up North, Ms. Jacobs wrote her slave narrative using her pseudonym name, Linda Brent. In her autobiography, she writes about her enslaved experiences. Once she escaped to the North, Brent writes, "I do earnestly desire to arouse the women of the North to a realizing sense of the condition of two millions of women at the South, still in bondage, suffering what I suffered, and most of them far worse."[24] Brent continues, "I want to add my testimony to that of abler pens to convince the people of the Free States what Slavery really is. Only by experience can anyone realize how deep, and dark, and foul is that pit of abominations."[25]

In the book, *Frederick Douglas: America's Prophet*, D.H. Dilbeck writes on one of America's greatest prophets and abolitionist. Dilbeck states, "The woods of Talbot

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[22] Bowens, *African American Readings of Paul*, 3.

[23] Bowens, *African American Readings of Paul,* 3.

[24] Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Boston, MA: G&D Media, 1861, 2020), 8, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Incidents_in_the_Life_of_a_Slave_Girl/1RwEAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&printsec=frontcover&bshm=rime/1.

[25] Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 8.

County, Maryland, echoed with songs of sadness. Frederick Bailey first heard them as a young slave at Wye House, the great home of the Lloyd family's sprawling plantation on the Eastern Shore. The mysterious melodies captivated Bailey."[26] Dilbeck continues, '"He sensed the singers' affliction, and yet as a child of six or seven years old he could not fully comprehend the anguished cries. The memory of these sorrow songs haunted Bailey. Every tone was a testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance from chains.'[27] Dilbeck goes on to say, "The songs shaped young Frederick's soul; they were his earliest catechism. But the questions loomed far larger than the answers in these songs, none more unsettling than, 'Why has God made me a slave?' Frederick agonized over this question when he realized he too was a slave."[28] In addition, Dilbeck states, "He searched for a satisfying answer as a child, while witnessing masters disregard the humanity of their slaves. Before his childhood ended, Frederick had decided that God was not responsible for his enslavement. It was his first momentous theological conviction, and perhaps the most important one of his life."[29]

Douglas recalls his successful attempt to freedom when he wrote, "I have never approved of the very public manner in which some of our western friends have conducted what they call the underground railroad, but which I think, by their open declarations, has been made most emphatically the upper-ground railroad."[30] Douglas continues, "In the

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[26] D. H. Dilbeck, *Frederick Douglass: America's Prophet* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 20018), 11.

[27] Dilbeck, *Frederick Douglass,* 11.

[28] Dilbeck, *Frederick Douglass,* 11.

[29] Dilbeck, *Frederick Douglass,* 11.

[30] Douglas, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 88.

early part of the year 1838, I became quite restless. I could see no reason why I should . . . pour the reward of my toil into the purse of my master. When I carried to him my weekly wages . . . after counting the money . . . ask, 'Is this all?'"[31] Douglas goes on to say,

> He would, however, when I made him six dollars, sometimes give me six cents, to encourage me. It had the opposite effect. I regarded it as a sort of admission of my right to the whole. The fact that he gave me any part of my wages was proof, to my mind, that he believed me entitled to the whole of them.[32]

Douglas, as he gets closer to the date of his escape, states, "I felt assured that, if I failed in this attempt, my case would be a hopeless one — it would seal my fate as a slave forever. I could not hope to get off with anything less than the severest punishment and being placed beyond the means of escape."[33] Douglas continues, "It required no very vivid imagination to depict the most frightful scenes through which I should have to pass in case I failed. The wretchedness of slavery, and the blessedness of freedom, were perpetually before me."[34] Douglas goes on to say,

> It was life and death with me. But I remained firm, and, according to my resolution, on the third day of September 1838, I left my chains, and succeeded in reaching New York without the slightest interruption of any kind. How I did so, – what means I adopted, – what direction I travelled, and by what mode of conveyance, — I must leave unexplained.[35]

In regards to Douglas and his thoughts on Westernized Christianity, he states,

> What I have said respecting and against religion, I mean strictly to apply to the slaveholding religion of this land, and with no possible reference to Christianity proper; for, between the Christianity of this land, and the Christianity of Christ, I

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[31] Douglas, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 89.

[32] Douglas, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 89.

[33] Douglas, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 92.

[34] Douglas, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 92.

[35] Douglas, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 92.

> recognize the widest possible difference — so wide, that to receive the one as good, pure, and holy, is of necessity to reject the other as bad, corrupt, and wicked.[36]

Douglas maintains that "To be the friend of the one, is of necessity to be the enemy of the other. I love the pure, peaceable, and impartial Christianity of Christ: I therefore hate the corrupt, slaveholding, women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this land.[37] Douglas persists to say, "Indeed, I can see no reason, but the most deceitful one, for calling the religion of this land Christianity. I look upon it as the climax of all misnomers, the boldest of all frauds, and the grossest of all libels."[38] "Never was there a clearer case of 'stealing the livery of the court of heaven to serve the devil in.' He who proclaims it a religious duty to read the Bible denies me the right of learning to read the name of the God who made me."[39]

Sam Sharpe, Linda Brent (Harriet Jacobs), and Frederick Douglas were three historical abolitionists who paved the way for many to follow. They are great examples of the power and spirit of God, moving in and through humanity to liberate themselves and others. For them, freedom was not about them as individuals but the collective community. That is why we need to know our history. William Barber writes, "You have to know your history, practice the moves who've gone before you . . . take the wisdom passed down to you and write the next verse of humanity's collective song. History

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[36] Douglas, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 100.

[37] Douglas, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 100.

[38] Douglas, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 100.

[39] Douglas, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 100.

showed me that what the Bible says is true: when we all get together, something powerful can happen"[40]

Barber continues, "Some new strength showed up when my mother and I got together at the piano. My family and my church got together, and we learned the truth of that old hymn which says, "When we all get together / what a day of rejoicing that will be!"[41] Barber also recounts historical evidence of when humanity comes together across dividing lines. Barber writes, "During slavery, it looked like justice had lost, but when Harriett Tubman and Frederick Douglass and some Quakers and white evangelicals got together, they formed a fusion movement that brought about abolition."[42] There was a time when women didn't have the right to vote. But when Sojourner Truth and Elizabeth Cady Stanton got together, they won the franchise.[43] In addition to those victories, the Civil Rights Movement succeeded in strides toward freedom as well. Barber explained, "In the mid-twentieth century, it looked like the system of Jim Crow had built a fortress around segregation in the South; but when Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King and Bayard Rustin got together with Glen Smiley, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Viola Liuzzo, they tore down segregation."[44]

What made the Civil Rights Movement even more powerful was the involvement of youth and young adult freedom fighters making the CRM more intergenerational. David J. Garrow states,

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[40] Barber, ll and Hartgrove, *The Third Reconstruction,*35.

[41] Barber, ll and Hartgrove, *The Third Reconstruction,*35.

[42] Barber, ll and Hartgrove, *The Third Reconstruction,*34.

[43] Barber, ll and Hartgrove, *The Third Reconstruction,*34.

[44] Barber, ll and Hartgrove, *The Third Reconstruction,*35.

> On February 1, 1960, four young black men who were students at North Carolina A & T College sat down at the lunch counter in a Greensboro F. W. Woolworth's store and refused to leave when they were denied service. Word of their act spread among fellow students, and the next day, more than two dozen occupied the lunch counter. Over the following four days the numbers grew larger and larger. A few white participants joined in, while other whites heckled the protesters. The effort spread to other Greensboro lunch counters until, by the end of the week, all such facilities were closed. With those spontaneous actions, the 'sit-ins' began.[45]

These young freedom fighters helped the movement spread throughout the South. Garrow continues, "By Monday, February 8, the sit-in protests had spread to Durham and Winston-Salem. They spread to Charlotte, Raleigh, Fayetteville, and Elizabeth City. They reached Norfolk and Portsmouth, Virginia, and Rock Hill, South Carolina."[46] With no prompting from any of the existing civil rights organizations or black adult leadership, a new stage in the black freedom struggle had been launched.[47]

Barber states,

> As the logo of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) captured so well with its image of white and black hands clasped together, the Second Reconstruction's power was in cross-racial, cross-class solidarity, embracing Chicano workers, Jewish students, Native American sisters and brothers, Malcolm X's challenge, and the Poor Peoples Campaign. When they got together, President John F. Kennedy issued Executive Order 10925, mandating that projects financed with federal funds 'take affirmative Action' to ensure that hiring and employment practices be free of racial bias.[48]

Also, what followed was the establishment of an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission . . . civil rights connected to economic justice in the Social Security

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[45] David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., And the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York, NY: Open Road Integrated Media 2015). 127.

[46] Garrow, *Bearing the Cross,*127.

[47] Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 127.

[48] Barber ll and Hartgrove, *The Third Reconstruction,*118.

Amendments of 1965.[49] We saw the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. President Johnson said on August 6, 1965, that the Voting Rights Act was a triumph for freedom as huge as any victory that's ever been won on any battlefield.[50] When people of all different faiths and colors came together and demanded change from a moral perspective, it touched the conscience of the nation. Moral fusion politics gained tremendous ground in the Second Reconstruction.[51]

Jonathan Augustine writes, "Problems associated with racial discrimination cannot be unilaterally solved by Blacks. It requires diverse people coming together. The Black Lives Matter movement brought together people of all races, as well as corporate giants and nonprofit community organizers in the seeking of social equity."[52] More importantly, after a white Minneapolis police officer killed George Floyd by keeping his knee on Floyd's neck for nine minutes and twenty-nine seconds, it clearly showed that America's social problems are better addressed when disparate groups come together to work in community.[53]

The theme of body connections across racial, generational, and religious traditions is a powerful example of what can be achieved when we join together under the spirit of God. This is the essence of racial atonement, a collective endeavor that can lead to the growth of God's kindom on earth. As I introduced in my thesis, Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz's

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[49] Barber, ll and Hartgrove, *The Third Reconstruction,*119.

[50] Barber, ll and Hartgrove, *The Third Reconstruction,*119.

[51] Barber, ll and Hartgrove, *The Third Reconstruction,*119.

[52] Jonathan C. Augustine, William H. Willimon, and Michael B. Curry. *Called to Reconciliation: How the Church Can Model Justice, Diversity, and Inclusion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022), 14-15.

[53] Augustine, Willimon, and Curry, *Called to Reconciliation,* 15.

perspective on kindom, which extends beyond the biological family to emphasize the importance of community, plays a crucial role in racial healing. Isasi-Diaz states, "I believe that apart from community we cannot be about the work of God — which for me is about the work of justice. And the measuring rod for community is how it enables and provides sustenance for friendships. But community, like family, does not just happen."[54] It requires intense, continuous work which must be given priority in the feminist movement, especially across racial/ethnic lines. I believe the building of a new order of relationships based in mutuality is at the core of women's liberation. And this new order of relationship must start among ourselves as feminists.[55]

Isasi Diaz continues, "In the late1970s feminist, ethicists, theologians, biblical scholars, and church historians began to grapple with the patriarchal and elitist implications of kingdom of God. It was within this framework that I proposed "kin-dom of God."' "Kin dom" struck a chord with me given the centrality of family in Latina/o culture."[56] To understand kin-dom of God, one has to examine the meaning and importance of family in Latina culture: a study of the understanding of family that can be drawn from the Gospels.[57] My attempt is simply to ground the metaphor kin-dom of God in the under standings presented in the Gospels with the understanding and importance of family in Latina/o communities.[58]

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[54] Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), Kindle edition.

[55] Isasi-Diaz, *Mujerista Theology.*

[56] Valentin, *In Our Own Voices*, 179.

[57] Valentin, *In Our Own Voices*, 179.

[58] Valentin, *In Our Own Voices*, 180.

Diaz describes family in her culture, "Family is very important in Latina/o culture, so much so, that in our communities we bring into our families all those who are important to us. And those we bring into the family are as much family as those born into the family."[59] Diaz continues, "Hardly any Latina/o family is without non-blood relatives who have the same duties and privileges as blood relatives. The institution of *compadrazgo* and *comadrazgo* is a system of relationships established between godparents, their godchildren, and the parents of the godchildren. This system reaches beyond religious occasions."[60] The *compadrazgo* and *comadrazgo* institution creates and sustains an effective infrastructure of interdependence that has the family at the center and extends family values such as unity, welfare, and honor in all directions into the community. The inclusion of non-blood relatives among Latina/o families is quite common. [61]

Diaz also explains kin-dom as a metaphor in relation to the Gospels of Jesus. Diaz states,

> A metaphor almost always introduces or discloses new elements. The analogous metaphor we are proposing-kin-dom of God-contributes a new understanding of the gospel message not by adding alien elements to the Gospels but by looking at them through a different lens. Kin-dom of God as a metaphor includes the meaning that 'kingdom' had for Jesus and his community while neither endorsing nor sustaining the oppressive understandings that have been added to it through our history.[62]

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[59] Valentin, *In Our Own Voices*, 180.

[60] Valentin, *In Our Own Voices*, 180.

[61] Valentin, *In Our Own Voices*, 180.

[62] Valentin, *In Our Own Voices*, 182-183.

Diaz continues, "'Kingdom of God' in the time of Jesus and the early Christian communities and kin-dom of God today are religious metaphors and as such they evoke 'an emotional, moral, or spiritual response.'"[63] They are "action guiding" metaphors because they are "reality depicting." It is precisely because "kingdom of God" is not any longer "reality depicting" in the twenty-first century, and because it has been used to endorse understandings that are anti-Gospel, that we instead propose kin-dom of God.[64]

Diaz gives her interpretation of a passage in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew. She states, "Jesus' sentiments in Mark 3:31-34 and in Matthew8:21-22 are not to be read as antifamily sentiments. Instead, these passages could be understood as a way of imbuing in his disciples a sense of kin among themselves."[65] Diaz goes on, "These texts can be read as Jesus focusing on the importance of family and expanding who is included in his family rather than as an attempt to weaken or discard family."[66] To constitute his disciples as kin, with God as Father, can be read also as a way for Jesus to counter the Roman Empire's societal organization that had the emperor as father. This could well have been Jesus' way of challenging the power of the empire.[67]

For Diaz, "Kin-dom of God very much hinges on the way Jesus molded his disciples into his new kin. Kin-dom as metaphor can be valuable in helping to create a contemporary understanding of the world order that Jesus worked and died for."[68] It

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[63] Valentin, *In Our Own Voices*, 183.

[64] Valentin, *In Our Own Voices*, 183.

[65] Valentin, *In Our Own Voices*, 184.

[66] Valentin, *In Our Own Voices*, 183.

[67] Valentin, *In Our Own Voices*, 183.

[68] Valentin, *In Our Own Voices*, 186.

values kinship without canonizing the patriarchal family. It moves away from the elitist and authoritarian characteristics of kingdoms and empires and focuses instead on relationality and mutuality.[69]

Theologian, scholar, mystic, and pastor of the first multicultural church in America, Howard Thurman, in his own way understood his Christian faith as the "Religion of Jesus." In his autobiography *With Head and Heart, The Autobiography of Howard Thurman,* Thurman recalls one of his conversations with a native of India, "I read a clipping from one of your papers giving an account of how one of your community was being hunted down by a mob on a Sunday night. When the men in a nearby church heard the news, they dismissed the service and joined in the manhunt."[70] The native of India continues, "When the poor man had been killed, they went back to resume their worship of their Christian God. I think that an intelligent young Negro such as yourself, here in our country on behalf of a Christian enterprise, is a traitor to all of the darker peoples of the earth."[71] He then closes by asking Thurman a profound question, "How can you account for yourself being in this unfortunate and humiliating position?"[72] Thurman responds with eloquence,

> I told him that I was not there to bolster a declining or disgraced Christian faith, nor did I come to make converts to Christianity. 'It is far from my purpose to symbolize anyone or anything. I think the religion of Jesus in its true genius offers me a promising way to work through the conflicts of a disordered world. I make a careful distinction between Christianity and the religion of Jesus.'[73]

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[69] Valentin, *In Our Own Voices*, 186.

[70] Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, 114.

[71] Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, 114.

[72] Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, 114.

[73] Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, 114.

In his book, *God of the Oppressed*, systematic theologian and Black liberationist, James H. Cone, writes, "The dialectic of theology and its sources pushes us to examine more closely the social context of theological language. Because Christian theology is human speech about God, it is always related to historical situations, and thus all of its assertions are culturally limited."[74] Cone goes on to quote H. Richard Niebuhr, "In other human inquiries there is no such thing as disinterestedness in theology, since no one can speak of God or gods at all save as valued beings or as values which cannot be apprehended save by a willing, feeling, responding self." [75] Niebuhr rightly connects theology with social existence. Cone continues, "Although God, the subject of theology, is eternal, theology itself is, like those who articulate it, limited by history and time. It is a finite image, limited by the temporality and particularity of our existence."[76] Cone goes on to state, "Theology is not universal language; it is interested language and thus is always a reflection of the goals and aspirations of a particular people in a definite social setting."[77]

Mukti Barton asked a serious question in his article, "Was Paul an Arch-advocate of Slavery or a Liberator?" In his contribution to the book, *Black Theology, Slavery and Contemporary Christianity*, Barton states, "Historians have asked, 'What happened to the human conscience which slept so peacefully for hundreds of years only to wake up when

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[74] James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, Revised edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), 36, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=1761119.

[75] Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 36.

[76] Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 36.

[77] Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 36.

slavery was not profitable anymore?' The British slave trade was abolished only when over-production of sugar was harming the British economy."[78] Barton continues,

> Another question to be asked is, what happened to the Bible and Christianity without the support of which, slavery could not have thrived for such a long time in the Christian world? White Christian slave masters could not have oppressed fellow human beings without first silencing their own conscience, and for that, there were texts in St Paul's epistles that could be easily manipulated. They found justification in the Bible, particularly in Pauline texts, for the subjugation of Black slaves. 'One ex-slave witnessed to the frequency with which the White preacher preached from St Paul's epistles, 'you must obey your masters and be good servants.' That is the greater part of the sermon, when they preach to the colored folks.[79]

Barton goes on to recall a conversation between Howard Thurman and his grandmother.

> Howard Thurman remembered his grandmother explaining to him, during the days of slavery, the master's minister would occasionally hold services for the slaves. Always the white minister used as his text something from Paul. At least three or four times a year he used as a text: 'Slaves, be obedient to them that are your masters as unto Christ.' I promised my Maker that if I ever learned to read and if freedom ever came, I would not read that part of the Bible.[80]

Barton goes on to say, "Since St Paul's epistles have been used and misused to subjugate people, they have remained questionable not only "to the darker peoples of the earth" but to many other Christians in their struggle for liberation, justice, and peace across the world."[81] Barton continues, "If these epistles are barriers to peace and justice, the best hermeneutical approach would be to reject them. Many today continue to adopt this method and reject St Paul's epistles as dangerous."[82] In his essay entitled, "'But It's

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[78] Reid-Salmon, "The Cost of Liberation," 47.

[79] Mukti Barton, "Was Paul an Arch-advocate of Slavery or a Liberator?" *Black Theology, Slavery and Contemporary Christianity,* ed. Anthony Reddie (Farham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2010), 47-48.

[80] Barton, "Was Paul an Arch-advocate of Slavery or a Liberator?" 48.

[81] Barton, "Was Paul an Arch-advocate of Slavery or a Liberator?"48.

[82] Barton, "Was Paul an Arch-advocate of Slavery or a Liberator?"48.

in the Text!' Slavery, the Bible, and the African Diaspora," Randall C. Bailey writes about the struggle that motivated his writing. Bailey writes, "It has caused me to explore my own understandings of the bible and the relationship to our lives in the northwestern hemisphere. This process has caused me to reflect on the ways we have conformed to, rebelled against, internalized, promoted, cooperated with, subverted, deconstructed, enabled our own oppression."[83] Bailey continues, "This has occurred, both during and after our experiences of enslavement through the use of Christian religious documents, dogmas, doctrines, and doodoo! There is no one narrative as regards our responses to our experiences of enslavement."[84]

Bailey goes on to quote Allen D. Callahan from his book, *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible*, where it states, "there were those who viewed the Bible as 'The Good Book,' while there were others who viewed it as 'The Poison Book'. Similarly, there were those who fought and rebelled against enslavement, while there were others who accommodated it and identified with their enslavers."[85]

> By the same token, there were attempts to use the language world of the bible to fight for manumission, while there were those who decried any allegiance or use of the biblical materials in the struggles for freedom. We know from the psychology of oppression that the human mind has a myriad of choices to exercise in the management of the phenomena of oppression.[86]

Bailey continues, "Data are truly multivalent and their interpretations are as varied as the methods for deciphering them. For example, in biblical studies, the existence of

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[83] Randall C. Bailey, "'But It's in the Text!' Slavery, the Bible, and the African Diaspora," ed. Reid-Salmon (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 1.

[84] Bailey, "'But It's in the Text!'" 1.

[85] Bailey, "'But It's in the Text!'"1.

[86] Bailey, "'But It's in the Text!'"1.

repetitions opens the doors to see them as signifiers of differing interpretations."[87] "For instance there are two stories of Abram/Abraham and Sarai/ Sarah sexually abusing Hagar and her fleeing/being expelled from their house in Genesis 16 and 21."[88]

In his book, *A Philosophy of Struggle,* Leonard Harris uses the term "Necro-Being" to explain the harsh realities of racism. In "Necro-Being," Harris describes racism as instantiation of necro-being (i.e., that which makes living a kind of death), a seminal form of oppression, its corporal being. Racialized populations are subjected to conditions of life that confer upon them the status of living dead; necro-tragedy (utter suffering and irredeemable loss).[89] Harris states,

> Racism is a form of necro-being: it kills and prevents persons from being born. It is absolute necro-tragedy. There is no redemption for the worst of its victims. Dominant groups acquire longer lives, assets, and high senses of self-worth at the cost of the extinction or sustained subordination of the subjugated. Racism kills as a function of the way especially health and wealth benefits occur to the communities for which racist belong through the aegis of fatal inventions of race. Racism is a polymorphous agent of death, premature births, shortened lives, starving children, debilitating theft, abusive larceny, degrading insults, and insulting stereotypes forcibly imposed.[90]

Harris continues, "Racism, despite the social formation within which it resides, creates a living death for masses of its victims. The working class may gain power in the future, but those who suffer now are not relieved by whatever ceremonies future generations hold in honor or memory of former workers."[91] Harris goes on to say, "Mistresses gained

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[87] Bailey, "'But It's in the Text!'"2.

[88] Bailey, "'But It's in the Text!'"2.

[89] Leonard Harris, *A Philosophy of Struggle*, The Leonard Harris Reader, ed Lee A. McBride, III (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), 69-96.

[90] Harris, *A Philosophy of Struggle*, 69.

[91] Harris, *A Philosophy of Struggle*, 71.

status, enjoyed sadistic pleasures, avoided life-destructive labor assigned to their subjects, acquired wealth, and obtained relatively better health care. Contemporary violence workers, police, soldiers, prison guards, and slave traffickers are well versed in the use of violence, receiving very often excellent salaries, awards, and community popularity."[92]

James H. Cone responded theologically and masterfully to the evil of lynching in America by self-proclaimed white Christians in his rendition, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. He entitled the fourth chapter, "The Recrucified Christ in Black Literary Imagination," with a poem by Countee Cullen written in 1922, entitled "Christ Recrucified."

> The South is crucifying Christ again By all the laws of ancient rote and rule: The ribald cries of 'Save Yourself" and 'Fool.' Din in his ears, the thorns grope for his brain, And where they bite, swift springing rivers stain His gaudy, purple robe of ridicule With sullen red; and acid wine to cool His thirst is thrust at him, with lurking pain. Christ's awful wrong is that he's dark of hue, The sin for which no blamelessness atones; But lest the sameness of the cross should tire They kill him now with famished tongues of fire, And while he burns, good men, and women, too, Shout, battling for his black and brittle bones.[93]

Cone writes, "Like Countee Cullen, many black poets, novelists, painters, dramatists, and other artists saw clearly what white theologians and clergy ignored and what black religious scholars and ministers merely alluded to."[94] Cone continues, "that in the United States, the clearest image of the crucified Christ was the figure of an innocent black victim, dangling from a lynching tree. Such victims were not abstract or anonymous symbols."[95] Cone goes on to give a few of their names.

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[92] Harris, *A Philosophy of Struggle*, 71.

[93] James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 93

[94] Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 93.

[95] Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 93.

> They were particular people; they had names; their passion was recorded (by their very murderers) in souvenir photos like . . . Rubin Stacey, hanged on a lynching tree in Fort Lauderdale, Laura Nelson and her son swinging from a bridge in Oklahoma, Cleo Wright burned to a crisp in a street in Sikeston, Missouri.[96]

Cone continues, "In the wake of slavery and the Civil War, there was so much ugliness in black life that one would have had to be blind not to see it . . . nothing, was uglier than lynching: hanging, burning, beating, dragging, and shooting — as well as torture, mutilation, and especially castration."[97] Cone goes on, "What enabled artists to see what Christian theologians and ministers would not? What prevented these theologians and ministers, who should have been the first to see God's revelation in black suffering, from recognizing the obvious gospel truth?"[98] Cone continues, "Did it require such a leap of imagination to recognize the visual and symbolic overtones between the cross and the lynching tree, both places of execution in the ancient and modern worlds?"[99] Cone states,

> Reinhold Niebuhr was correct to observe. No one can claim that black preachers' sermonic orations lacked rhetorical imagination. Yet both white theologians such as Niebuhr and black preachers throughout African American history either did not see the parallels between the cross and the lynching tree or else they were too fearful of the dire consequences –loss of social status, work, and possibly life – to make the connection. In short, they lacked imagination of the most crucial and moral kind.[100]

Cone continues, "It takes a powerful imagination, grounded in historical experience, to uncover the great mysteries of black life. We have been in the storm so long, 'tossed and

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[96] Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree,* 93-94.

[97] Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 94.

[98] Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 94.

[99] Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 94.

[100] Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 94.

driven,' singing and praying, weeping, and wailing, trying to carve out some meaning in tragic situations."[101] Cone carries on saying, "Black suffering needs radical and creative voices, prophetic advocates who can tell brutal and beautiful stories of how oppressed black people survived with a measure of dignity. Who are we? Why are we here? And what must we do to achieve our full humanity in a world that denies it?"[102]

First Testament Scholar Kenneth N. Ngwa speaks of the Exodus through the lens of letting people live. Ngwa states, "In Africana exodus epistemology, I have argued, triple traumas of erasure, alienation, and singularity are symbolized in the objects of the slave ship, the slave castle, and the post colony."[103] Ngwa continues, "These traumas require deep conversations across their doors of no return — their seeming declarative claims that the endangered, marginalized, and singularized community cannot return (undo the damage of racism, patriarchy, colonialism, and imperialism)."[104] Ngwa persist in saying,

> The urgent depiction of exodus as departure from an oppressive nation-state house and machinery is formulated and encapsulated in Moses' divinely inspired clarion call: 'let my people go.' But that call is more than an episodic manifestation of negotiation between Yahweh and Pharaoh. The call signifies an equally perennial and persistent call, ushered through voices from below, a call better represented by the words 'let my people live.' To insist on the primordial imperative of life is to resist Pharaoh's institution of conditional existence ('if it is a boy, he shall live') and to accelerate the production of multiple mechanisms and strategies of communal existence that enhance the vibrancy of life in its multiply gendered, national, and transnational manifestations — the character and quality

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[101] Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 94-95.

[102] Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 95.

[103] Kenneth N. Ngwa, *Let My People Live, an African Reading of Exodus* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2022). 78-79.

[104] Ngwa, *Let My People Live*, 79.

> of life that existed prior to Pharaoh's ethnocentric and monogendered governance.[105]

Ngwa goes on, "In responding to these crises, and in creating foundational epistemologies for its myths of origins and futures, the Exodus story foregrounds resistance to the erasure of life, creates bridges that span the chasms of alienation, and exemplifies insider-outsider endeavors as counteractive to singularized existence."[106] "In locating its myths of origins and futures in the creative abilities of a marginalized group, the Exodus story narratively institutionalizes their hermeneutical capacities in ways that exceed ideologies and structures of erasure, alienation, and isolation — in Egypt, in the Wilderness, in the Mountain, and beyond."[107]

In his latest book to date entitled, *Let the Oppressed Go Free, Exploring Theologies of Liberation*, Marvin A. McMickle explains, "the major premise of Black theology, namely, that the sin of racism had infected the nation in general and the body of Christ in particular."[108] McMickle continues, "Moreover, neither the church nor theological education had responded adequately to the reality of racism or to white privilege and the assumptions and institutional realities of white supremacy as the social arrangement upon which the United States was founded."[109] McMickle goes on to explain the tension between Black liberationist like Martin Luther King Jr. of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and Stokely Carmichael of the

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[105] Ngwa. *Let My People Live*, 79.

[106] Ngwa, *Let My People Live*, 79.

[107] Ngwa, *Let My People Live*, 79.

[108] Marvin Andrew McMickle, *Let the Oppressed Go Free: Exploring Theologies of Liberation* Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2020), 7.

[109] McMickle, *Let the Oppressed Go Free,* 17.

Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). McMickle states, "During a speech on July 28, 1966, Carmichael repeatedly declared, 'We want Black power.'" King tried to soften the blow of what Carmichael said, but a clear schism had emerged between the older and more established forces of nonviolent protest in SCLC and the younger and more impatient members of SNCC."[110] McMickle continues, "I kept asking myself if you can be Black and Christian in this country with all that was going on, and with the silence coming from the white church and the pettiness coming from many leaders of the Black Baptist church."[111]

McMickle goes on to say,

> With Black power rising on one side with its dismissal of Christianity as a force for social transformation, and with the Nation of Islam rising on the other side with its critique of Christianity as 'the white man's religion," the critical question for me and for many of my generation was whether Christianity had anything to say about or offer to the Black freedom struggle that was raging in the country. James Cone offered an answer to the question. With a resounding 'yes,' he assured us that we could be both Black and Christian in 1969 and in the turbulent years that followed.[112]

McMickle continues, "The heart of the gospel message lined up perfectly with the aspirations being expressed in the Black freedom struggle. God's care and concern for the poor and the oppressed."[113] McMickle continues, "If God was on the side of the oppressed, and if Black people in the United States were an obvious example of people

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[110] McMickle, *Let the Oppressed Go Free,* 20.

[111] McMickle, *Let the Oppressed Go Free,* 25.

[112] McMickle, *Let the Oppressed Go Free,* 25-26.

[113] McMickle, *Let the Oppressed Go Free,* 26.

living under oppression, then God was identified with the Black freedom struggle. To be Christian was to be engaged in the struggle for Black liberation."[114]

Conclusion

I have included and explored a diverse range of liberationist theologies such as Black liberation theology, abolitionist theology, kin-dom theology, and African and African American theology. All but kin-dom theology (Latino/a feminist) are examined through a Black hermeneutical school of thought, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive exploration. The intersectionality of these theologies was and continues to be crucial to American society becoming an egalitarian beloved community. Abolitionists such as Mr. Sam Sharpe, George Bourne, William Lloyd Garrison, Samuel Hopkins, and Granville Sharp are historical figures who, in the face of the evil of enslavement, were fearless about ending the enslavement system. James H. Cone, the founder of Black liberation theology, inspired many African Americans to re-imagine the reading of the Holy Scriptures, the Bible, through a new hermeneutical lens that sees God on the side of oppressed people. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz now inspired many to reimagine the kingdom of God through a kin-dom lens. These iconic figures' radicality and radicalness have encouraged many generations to continue the fight against all forms of white supremacy against Black and Brown bodies.

Approximately 256 years of legal chattel enslavement of Africans and African Americans, and one hundred years of Jim and Jane Crow segregation, between the two,

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[114] McMickle, *Let the Oppressed Go Free,* 26.

are some of the worst violations against humanity that we know in human history perpetuated by white Christians. In their book, *How to Think Theologically*, Howard W. Stone and James O. Duke state, "Christians: their faith makes them theologians. Deliberately or not, they think – and act – out of a theological understanding of existence."[115] What theological understanding motivated white racist Christians to such a crime against humanity? And, during the years of Jim and Jane Crow, where was the voice, the outrage from the Christian churches across America — Black and white churches? In that context of church silence comes a voice speaking loud and clear from the wilderness of Union Theological Seminary. In the wilderness of Black oppression, James H. Cone spoke with a powerful voice. Although Dr. Cone was despised and rejected, he continued to speak up and out against white supremacy in the church.

Dr. Cone has passed a baton to Black liberationist theologians like me to heal a body of believers in a particular vineyard for the Lord. Racial atonement is birthed out of the liberationist tradition of Jesus the Christ. In the next chapter, the Interdisciplinary Foundations unit, the work of atonement will be viewed through the concept of "narrative theory."

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[115] Howard W. Stone and James O. Duke, *How to Think Theologically*, Third ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 1.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter will focus on narrative theory and the importance of reclaiming the oral and aural storytelling tradition in multigenerational communities. Heather Murray Elkins states, "Human consciousness is a process of binding things together. We have a genetic disposition to 'grasp' life and make tangible connections with the embodied language of our senses and our bodily and psychological relationships."[1]

> These 'bound together' relationships are also the neutral pathways for sacramental consciousness. What are these ties that bind? They are the verbal processing of sensed experience, ritual gestures, and the work of creating mental and material relationships. This process of binding, this consciousness of tangible connections is at the center of our ceremonial life (from the Latin, *caerimonia*, to bind back together that which is separate).[2]

The process of bounding or binding together is the practice of conciliation. Our problem-solving methods must change from that of having solutions passed from an authority figure to a style in which all points of view are considered and respected.[3] We look to improve our methods of communication and problem-solving and, as a result,

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[1] Heather Murray Elkins, *Holy Stuff of Life: Stories, Poems, And Prayers About Human Things*. (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2006), xi.

[2] Elkins, *Holy Stuff of Life*, xi.

[3] Graeme Higgs, "The Principles and Practice of Conciliation," *Conciliation Courts Review* 24, no. 2 (December 1986): 47.

have adopted a method known as "conciliation," where parties are offered a voluntary solution to a conflict.[4] It is the role of the conciliator to deal with the issues in a way which will foster the possibility of a more benign relationship developing between them. For the conciliation process to work effectively, it is necessary to suspend the battle.[5]

Anne E. Streaty Wimberly states, "There continues to be a powerful call for Christian education that centers on the stories that frame persons' everyday lives and that bring forth liberating wisdom and hope-building vocation."[6] Wimberly continues, "This call has become even more piercing because of myriad critical issues that are an integral part of current-day stories and due to the diminishing attention to story-sharing in family and community life."[7] Wimberly goes on to ask questions such as:

> How may our stories connect with God's Story in ways that give liberating wisdom and hope-building vocation along life's sojourn if we do not share them, look at them critically, and discern responsible choices? What may individuals and families learn from sharing stories both of struggle and of promise?[8]

Wimberly proposes seven dimensions of liberation that are interrelated and crucial to the "Story-Linking Process."[9] They are, "spiritual liberation, ethical liberation, material liberation, sociopolitical liberation, psychosocial liberation, educational liberation, and communal liberation."[10]

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[4] Higgs, "The Principles and Practice of Conciliation," 47.

[5] Higgs, "The Principles and Practice of Conciliation," 49.

[6] Anne E. Streaty Wimberly, *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), xi.

[7] Wimberly, *Soul Stories,* xi.

[8] Wimberly, *Soul Stories,* xi.

[9] Wimberly, *Soul Stories,* xii.

[10] Wimberly, *Soul Stories,* 9-11.

Interdisciplinary Theory

Narrative Theory studies investigates the tradition of oral and aural storytelling, and the ways in which story-telling leads to liberation of our souls. "The quest for story and storytelling brings relevance to Christian education. Story is a powerful part of human existence. We humans live an evolving narrative, or story, that forms from the storied world around us. Life as a story is eventful. It is not static."[11] "Our lives have a past, a present, and a future in some place and in some circumstance. Our lives move on. Or, it can be said that human experiences take on a narrative quality as they unfold within the framework of context, time, and space."[12] "Those who emphasize the importance of a story orientation also tell us that we humans think in narrative form and that our communicative process is inherently narrative."[13] To be a person is to live in a story; and sharing our stories helps us appreciate ourselves as agent-subjects in history.

By sharing, we recognize and communicate the resources and wisdom contained in our stories and our story-sharing provides an approach "that helps to heal a paralysis of the mind."'[14] "Storytelling is not new. Across generations and cultures, storytelling has been an integral part of life. The stories people told revealed the roots of their histories, aspects of the lives they lived in the present, and the lives they imagined and hoped for in the future.[15]

> Oral wisdom from black Christian adults and forbears have been and continue to be gifts to the community precisely because of the timeless truths in them about

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[11] Wimberly, *Soul Stories*, 3.

[12] Wimberly, *Soul Stories*, 3.

[13] Wimberly, *Soul Stories*, 3.

[14] Wimberly, *Soul Stories*, 3-4.

[15] Wimberly, *Soul Stories.* 4.

> life's realities, spiritual values, and direction for living with hope and integrity. The appearance of these materials coincides within tense interest in the black community for guidance on how to live in want and in plenty, how to surmount the storms of life, and how to face an unknown future. The sentiment among black people abounds that the current fast-paced, knowledge-rich, technological age has not satisfied deep hungers for wholeness or positive relatedness to God, self, others, and the environment.[16]

"One of the crucial issues that we had to face as a Church Council and as officers of the church trying to head in a new direction was the question of identity. We had to change our image of ourselves *for* ourselves!"[17]

Professors Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley state, "Beyond being simply a character conveyed in the stories of others, each of us is the primary author of our own life narrative. We continuously and actively author and reauthor our lives through story, articulating for ourselves and others the choices we make and the things we have done."[18] "The aim of storytelling is to interact with others and identify common ground; stories have the potential to build authentic communities of shared meaning and values. We interpret ourselves to others through story more often than we are aware and maybe even more often than we intend."[19] Anderson and Foley continue, "When we tell stories about ourselves, we are often amazed to discover unknown commonalties that bond us quickly with strangers or deepen the affections of friends or family. When our autobiographical

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[16] Anne Streaty Wimberly and Evelyn L. Parker, *In Search of Wisdom: Faith Formation in the Black Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 12.

[17] Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr., *A Sankofa Moment: The History of Trinity United Church of Christ* (Dallas, TX: Saint Paul Press, 2012), 72.

[18] Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 7.

[19] Anderson and Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*, 7.

tales are self-effacing, disarming, or amusing, they reveal the kind of openness that is necessary for building community."[20] "Storytelling not only makes us human; it creates vulnerability."[21]

"Defining ourselves through story is both a personal and a communal act and thus a matter of psychological and social responsibility. In storytelling our personal autonomy is confronted by our social context, our primary authorship is challenged by a sea of coauthors."[22] "We are communal creatures; thus, storytelling and storymaking are always psychosocial activities. They contribute mightily to the creation and maintenance of human communities. Self-narration, therefore, it not simply an individual activity. Storytelling and storyliving is also a community activity."[23]

> They build bonds, make identification possible, break down barriers, and enable us to recognize the commonality of our experience. In that sense, storytelling is dangerous. Through story we become aware that our lives are often more vulnerable than mighty. Narrating and discovering the common themes in our individual stories enables us to build community around shared vulnerability. When they are honest, stories express and create community.[24]

"What is most important about this theme is that we cannot and need not escape the narrative structure of human life. Telling stories is the way to be human. Even as we create our stories, we are at the same time being shaped by the stories we fashion."[25] "This narrative approach to life is risky; however, authentic life as individuals and in

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[20] Anderson and Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*, 10.

[21] Anderson and Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*, 10.

[22] Anderson and Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*, 18.

[23] Anderson and Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*, 18.

[24] Anderson and Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*, 18.

[25] Anderson and Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*, 19.

community reveals more than it conceals. It keeps the tension between mythic and parabolic stories so that the stories we tell will reveal enough ambiguity and vulnerability to create and sustain human communities."[26]

"Narrative theory is currently enjoying a major burgeoning of interest in North America and throughout the world, with especially strong activity in the U.S., Canada, the UK., France, Germany, Scandinavia, Belgium, Israel, and China."[27] "Narrative theory starts from the assumption that narrative is a basic human strategy for coming to terms with fundamental elements of our experience, such as time, process, and change, and it proceeds from this assumption to study the distinctive nature of narrative, its various structures, elements, uses, and effects."[28] .

"Narrative theorists study is distinctive about narrative (how it is different from other kinds of discourse, such as lyric poems, arguments, lists, descriptions, statistical analyses, and so on). It accounts for what happened to particular people in particular circumstances with particular consequences that is so common and so powerful."[29] "Thus a key concern is whether narrative as a way of thinking about or explaining human experience contrasts with scientific modes of explanation that characterize phenomena of

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[26] Anderson and Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*, 19.

[27] Jim Phelan and Antonio Ferraro, "What is Narrative Theory?" The Ohio State University, College of Arts and Science, Columbus, OH. 2023, https://projectnarrative.osu.edu/about/what-is-narrative-theory.

[28] Jim Phelan and Antonio Ferraro, "What is Narrative Theory?" The Ohio State University, College of Arts and Science, Columbus, OH. 2023, https://projectnarrative.osu.edu/about/what-is-narrative-theory.

[29] Jim Phelan and Antonio Ferraro, "What is Narrative Theory?" The Ohio State University, College of Arts and Science, Columbus, OH. 2023, https://projectnarrative.osu.edu/about/what-is-narrative-theory.

general covering laws. Narrative theorists study how stories help people make sense of the world, while also studying how people make sense of stories."[30]

"Narrative theorists draw not only on literary studies but also on ideas from such fields as rhetoric, (socio) linguistics, philosophical ethics, cognitive science (including cognitive and social psychology), folklore, and gender theory to explore how narratives work both as kinds of texts and as strategies for navigating experience."[31]

> Narratives of all kinds are relevant to the field: literary fictions and nonfictions, film narratives, comics and graphic novels, hypertexts and other computer-mediated narratives, oral narratives occurring during the give and take of everyday conversation, as well as narratives told in courtrooms, doctors' offices, business conference rooms — indeed, anywhere. Because of the pervasiveness of narrative in our culture and the diversity of the texts, media, and communicative situations narrative theory examines, narrative theory constitutes an exciting new frontier of English Studies, one that promises to bring English Department faculty and students into closer contact with their counterparts in a variety of social-scientific, humanistic, and other disciplines.[32]

Theory and the Theme

"'Narrative' is a term used very broadly in everyday life, as well as in literary studies, cultural studies, psychoanalytic studies, history, fine art, socio-legal studies, criminology, philosophy, management, computer game studies and film theory."[33]

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[30] Jim Phelan and Antonio Ferraro, "What is Narrative Theory?" The Ohio State University, College of Arts and Science, Columbus, OH. 2023, https://projectnarrative.osu.edu/about/what-is-narrative-theory.

[31] Jim Phelan and Antonio Ferraro, "What is Narrative Theory?" The Ohio State University, College of Arts and Science, Columbus, OH. 2023, https://projectnarrative.osu.edu/about/what-is-narrative-theory.

[32] Jim Phelan and Antonio Ferraro, "What is Narrative Theory?" The Ohio State University, College of Arts and Science, Columbus, OH. 2023, https://projectnarrative.osu.edu/about/what-is-narrative-theory.

[33] Corinne Squires, Mark Davis, Cigdem Esin, Molly Andrews, Barbara Harrison, Hýden Lars-Christer, and Hýden Margareta*, What Is Narrative Research? What Is? Research Methods Series* (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2014), 1.

"President Obama is well known for using stories skillfully within his speeches. His campaigns deployed personal stories to convey important aspects of policy and to mobilize activists. Obama's presidency had important elements in the United States' highly racialized national narrative, and in broader narratives of globalization and transnationalism."[34] "This first win generated positive responses worldwide to Obama's family story of migration, vicissitude, and success, as well as to the story of an event unthinkable till very recently: the arrival of an African-American President, of African background, in the White House."[35]

"In March 2008, during his first election campaign, President Barack Obama gave a powerful, effective speech which is now commonly called the 'race speech,' or the 'more perfect union' speech. Obama made the speech in Philadelphia, where the US Constitution was written."[36] "He began and ended with the idea of a 'more perfect union' within the nation that appears in the Preamble to the Constitution."[37] "He made this speech at a time when many Republicans, and some Democrats, were calling for him to reject the angry, 'God damn America' approach to issues of race and racism of his former pastor, Rev. Jeremiah right (Obama, 2008).'"[38] "At the end of the speech, Obama told what he called a 'story."

"There is one story that I would like to leave you with – a story I told…on Dr. King's birthday at his home church, Ebenezer Baptist, in Atlanta. There was a young, 23-

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[34] Squires et al., *What Is Narrative Research?*, 3.

[35] Squires et al., *What Is Narrative Research?*, 3.

[36] Squires et al., *What Is Narrative Research?*, 4.

[37] Squires et al., *What Is Narrative Research?*, 3.

[38] Squires et al., *What Is Narrative Research?*, 4.

year-old woman, a white woman, named Ashley Baia who organized for our campaign in Florence, South Carolina."[39] "She had been working to organize a mostly African-American community since the beginning of this campaign, and one day she was at a roundtable discussion where everyone went around telling their story and why they were there. Ashley said that when she was nine years old, her mother got cancer."[40] "And because she had to miss days of work, she was let go and lost her health care. They had to file for bankruptcy and that is when Ashley decided that she had to do something to help her mom."[41] "She knew that food was one of their most expensive costs, and so Ashley convinced her mother that what she really liked and really wanted to eat more than anything else was mustard and relish sandwiches. Because that was the cheapest way to eat."[42] "It's the mind of a nine-year-old. She did this for a year until her mom got better. Ashley told everyone at the roundtable the reason she joined our campaign was so that she could help the millions of other children who want and need to help their parents too."[43]

> Now Ashley might have made a different choice. Perhaps somebody told her along the way that the source of her mother's problems were blacks who were on welfare and too lazy to work, or Hispanics who were coming into the country illegally. But she didn't. She sought out allies in her fight against injustice. Ashley finishes her story and then goes around the room and asks everyone else why they're supporting the campaign. They all have different stories and different reasons. Many bring up a specific issue. And finally, they come to this elderly black man who's been sitting there quietly the entire time. Ashley asks him why he's there. And he doesn't bring up a specific issue. He does not say health care or the economy. He does not say education or the war. He does not say that he was

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[39] Squire et al., *What Is Narrative Research?*, 4.

[40] Squire et al., *What Is Narrative Research?*, 4.

[41] Squire et al., *What Is Narrative Research?*, 4.

[42] Squire et al., *What Is Narrative Research?*, 4.

[43] Squire et al., *What Is Narrative Research?*, 4.

> there because of Barack Obama. He simply says to everyone in the room, 'I am here because of Ashley.'(applause) 'I'm here because of Ashley.'[44]

"By itself, that single moment of recognition between that young white girl and that old black man is not enough. It is not enough to give health care to the sick, or jobs to the jobless, or education to our children."[45] "But it is where we start. It is where our union grows stronger as so many generations have come to realize over the course of the 221 years since a band of patriots signed that document right here in Philadelphia, that is where the perfection begins."[46]

Educator Lee Anne Bell links narrative to doing social justice. Bell states, "*Storytelling for Social Justice* offers a practical, critical framework for thinking about and acting on stories about racism and other forms of injustice, historical and contemporary, to develop common ground with others to work for racial and social justice."[47] Bell goes on,

> I noticed how often people draw on stories to explicate their views about race, and the persistent ways that certain stories repeat. I also noticed that students who were more knowledgeable and conscious about racism (more often, though not exclusively, students of color), were able to comment on the racial assumptions embedded in stories in the ways that enabled less aware classmates to discern racism through the vehicle of the words spread before them.[48]

"When white students recognized themselves in these stories, they were more open to reflecting on their own racial socialization in critical ways. It also seemed that students of

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[44] Squire et al., *What Is Narrative Research?*, 4-5.

[45] Squire et al., *What Is Narrative Research?*, 4.

[46] Squire et al., *What Is Narrative Research?*, 5.

[47] Lee Anne Bell, *Storytelling for Social Justice*: *Connecting Narrative and the Arts in Antiracist Teaching* (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 7.

[48] Bell, *Storytelling for Social Justice*, 9.

color could point out the racist content without feeling they had to temper their insights to avoid defensiveness from White classmates."[49]

Coach Tony Dungy, the first African American head coach in the National Football League (NFL) to win a Super Bowl, speaks in his autobiography about the importance of narrative during family crises. Coach Dungy states, "One difficult part of sharing our story has been talking to so many people who have lost children or siblings. It's a sobering reminder that life is not perfect and tragedies do happen. Our readers shared their stories as well, stories about changed lives and restored relationships."[50]

Hall of Fame Basketball Coach John Thompson recalls the importance of narrative to building relationships. Coach Thompson says, "My players rarely tell me I was a great coach. They say I taught them a lot about life. For me, coaching was more than getting kids to put the ball through the hoop."[51] "Coaching was when Alonzo got mixed up with Rayful, when Victor Page broke curfew, when Derrick Jackson tried to play with a bleeding ulcer, when Allen's mother was in tears in my office."[52] "Coaching was about building relationships with players most people never heard of. We did win a lot of games, which encouraged white people to bring more of us into their schools, including Black kids who are not athletes."[53]

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[49] Bell, *Storytelling for Social Justice*, 9.

[50] Tony Dungy with Nathan Whitaker, *Quiet Storm the Principles, Practices, & Priorities of a Winning Life* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishing, Inc., 2007), 305.

[51] John Thompson with Jesse Washington, *I came as a Shadow: An Autobiography John Thompson* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company Publishers, 2020), 317.

[52] Thompson with Jesse Washington, *I came as a Shadow*, 317.

[53] Thompson with Jesse Washington, *I came as a Shadow*, 317-318.

The first African American First Lady, Michelle Obama, talks about the importance of the ancestors in her narrative form. First Lady Michelle states, "I carried a history with me, and it wasn't that of presidents or First Ladies. I'd never related to the story of John Quincy Adams the way I did to that of Sojourner Truth or been moved by Woodrow Wilson the way I was by Harriet Tubman."[54] "The struggles of Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King were more familiar to me than those of Eleanor Roosevelt or Mamie Eisenhower. I carried their histories, along with those of my mother and grandmothers."[55] "None of these women could ever have imagined a life like the one I now had, but they'd trusted that their perseverance would yield something better, eventually, for someone like me. I wanted to show up in the world in a way that honored who they were."[56]

Theory and the Bible

> There is a narrative structure of the Bible that unfolds in telling the Story of God and the importance of that Story in shaping the character of people's lives. Our African American forebears in slavery were cognizant of the Bible as a storied document with which they could link their own stories, and from which they could find direction and hope in the hard trials and tribulations of their circumstances.[57]

"Their storytelling continued a revered African ancestral manner of relating in community. It allowed them to reveal the depth of their own experiences and pose tough questions about life."[58] "It connected them to God's guiding, sustaining, and transforming

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[54] Michelle Obama, *Becoming* (New York, NY: Crown Publishing Group Press, 2018), 365-366.

[55] Michelle Obama, *Becoming*, 366.

[56] Michelle Obama, *Becoming*, 366.

[57] Wimberly, *Soul Stories*, 4.

[58] Wimberly, *Soul Stories,* 4.

story in the Bible, to resources from the past, and led them to decide how they would act amid the realities of life as moral and accountable beings."[59] "Over the years, Christians have echoed and passed onto new generations phrases such as "God didn't bring us this far to leave us," "Keep on keepin' on," "There is a balm in Gilead," "Hold to God's unchanging hand," and "Don't forget where you came from."[60] "Typically, shared wisdom has taken the form of these and other oral proverbial sayings and song lines. Revered Bible verses, life stories, and commentaries on life also add to the store house of wisdom from which black people have drawn inspiration and guidance."[61]

> Liberation has punctuated the story of African Americans beginning with the sojourn of our forebears in slavery. It became encapsulated in the prophetic statement: 'God wants us free!' which voiced the belief in God's desire for our freedom from humiliation and subjugation to live and move and have our being with human dignity in a just society. It became the centerpiece of a black liberation theology that gave priority to the theological and ethical position that not simply does God want us free, but God through Jesus Christ sides with oppressed people in their struggle for freedom.[62]

"I have learned from African Americans churches and seminary classes that we cannot tarry on the issue current theology fashioned in and developed further after mid-twentieth-century Movement. Indeed, two key approaches to liberation have surfaced in these conversations."[63] "First, it is essential that we rearticulate what we understand liberation to be from inside the stories of our lives. Second, we must search for the

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[59] Wimberly, *Soul Stories,* 4.

[60] Wimberly and Parker, *In Search of Wisdom,* 11.

[61] Wimberly, *Soul Stories,* 11.

[62] Wimberly, *Soul Stories*, 5.

[63] Wimberly, *Soul Stories*, 5.

wisdom necessary for us to freely decide a way forward with God knowing God's hope in us and our hope in God."[64]

"To say that Jesus Christ is the truth of the Christian story calls for further examination. It is one thing to assert that the New Testament describes Jesus as the Oppressed One who came to liberate the poor and the weak, but who is Jesus Christ for us today?"[65] "Truth is more than the retelling of the biblical story. Truth is the divine happening that invades our contemporary situation, revealing the meaning of the past for the present so that we are made new creatures for the future."[66] "It is therefore our commitment to the divine truth, as witnessed to in the biblical story, that requires us to investigate the connection between Jesus' words and deeds in first-century Palestine and our existence today. This is the crux of the christological issue that no Christian theology can avoid."[67]

The interplay of social context with scripture and tradition is the starting point for an investigation of Jesus Christ's meaning for today. The focus on social context means that we cannot separate our questions about Jesus from the concreteness of everyday life.[68]

> We ask, 'Who is Jesus Christ for us today?' because we believe that the story of his life and death is the answer to the human story of oppression and suffering. If our existence were not at stake, if we did not experience the pain and the contradictions of life, then the christological question

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[64] Wimberly, *Soul Stories*, 5.

[65] James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, Revised ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), 99.

[66] Cone, *God of the Oppressed,* 99.

[67] Cone, *God of the Oppressed,* 99.

[68] Cone, *God of the Oppressed,* 99.

> would be an intellectual exercise for professional theologians. Christians who have experienced the extreme absurdities of life, the christological question is practical. It arises from the encounter of Christ in the struggle of freedom.[69]

Our question about Christ is derived from Christ as he breaks into our social existence, establishing the truth of freedom in our midst. This divine event of liberation places us in a new sociopolitical context. We are given the gift of faith for the creation of a new future for ourselves and for humanity.[70] "It is because we have encountered Christ in our historical situation and have been given the faith to struggle for truth that we are forced to inquire about the meaning of this truth for the totality of human existence."[71]

The Bible does not consist of units of infallible truth about God or Jesus. Rather, it tells the story of God's will to redeem humankind from sin, death, and Satan. According to the New Testament witnesses, God's decisive act against these powers happened in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.[72] Theologian Dwight N. Hopkins says, "Within the American Christian narrative, the Garden of Eden suggests an important place for how and where God

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[69] Cone, *God of the Oppressed,* 99-100.

[70] Cone, *God of the Oppressed,* 100.

[71] Cone, *God of the Oppressed,* 100.

[72] Cone, *God of the Oppressed,* 101.

consciously chose to reveal the divine self to humankind. And whether Eden's location is mythology, theology, or science."[73]

> Christianity privileges the story of the Garden because the entire religious understanding of God's revelation to humankind hinges on the origins of the human race coming directly from divine manufacturing. The biblical narrative provides a picture of the divinity directly offering an image and likeness of the divine self in the soul and body of woman and man.[74]

Theory and Theology

> In the examination of history, we find Ida B. Wells among others.
>
> Why Ida B. Wells? Because she did the work no one else would do. She kept showing up where she wasn't wanted. She worked with people who would work with her. She worked with people she didn't agree with and with whom she fought constantly. She worked for the betterment of a country that saw her doubly, as a black woman and as second-class citizen. She lived through some of the darkest times in American history and did not live to see the biggest advancements that her daily work yielded in later decades.[75]

Yet she believed in herself, and in her ability to get things done, not just for herself, but for her fellow citizens. Though born into slavery, she came to consciousness in the time of the Emancipation Proclamation.[76] "Her primary definition was not 'slave,' not 'property of white people'; her primary definition was daughter of God. She was held in slavery by those who professed the idea that all people are created equal. She never

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[73] Dwight N. Hopkins, *Being Human: Race, Culture, and Religion* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 126.

[74] Hopkins, *Being Human*, 126.

[75] Meeks and Stroupe, *Passionate for Justice,* 1.

[76] Meeks and Stroupe, *Passionate for Justice,* 1.

[76] Meeks and Stroupe, *Passionate for Justice,* 1.

allowed that oppression narrative to enter her heart and consciousness and to become internalized."[77]

The dialectic of theology and its sources pushes us to examine more closely the social context of theological language. Because Christian theology is human speech about God, it is always related to historical situations, and thus all of its assertions are culturally limited.[78] "H. Richard Niebuhr makes this point, "Whatever be the case in other human inquiries, there is no such thing as disinterestedness in theology. No one can speak of God or gods at all save as valued beings . . . as values which cannot be apprehended save by a willing, feeling, responding self."[79]

> Niebuhr connects theology with social existence. God, the subject of theology, is eternal, theology itself is, like those who articulate it, limited by history and time. Theology is not universal language; it is interested language . . . a reflection of the goals and aspirations of a particular people in a definite social setting.[80]

Theology is not what theologians claim it to be, i.e., a reflection upon an eternal being; theology is anthropology. What theologians mistake for God is nothing but the "latent nature" of humanity.[81] "The only legitimate starting point of theology is the man Jesus who is the revelation of God. Whatever is said about culture must be said in the light of this prior perspective. Culture is the situation of modern man that must be the point of relevant theology — divine-human identification is the risk of faith.[82] "The risk

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[77] Meeks and Stroupe, *Passionate for Justice,* 1-2.

[78] Cone, *God of the Oppressed,* 36.

[79] Cone, *God of the Oppressed,* 36.

[80] Cone, *God of the Oppressed,* 36.

[81] Cone, *God of the Oppressed,* 37.

[82] James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation,* Fortieth Anniversary ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 22.

of faith is based on the fact that the unconditional element can become a matter of ultimate concern only if it appears in a concrete embodiment. Culture, then, is the medium through which the human person encounters the divine and thus makes a decision.[83]

Because a perspective refers to the whole of a person's being in the context of a community, the sources and norm of black theology must be consistent with the perspective of the black community . . . white American theologians do not belong to the black community and cannot relate the gospel to that community.[84]

> Invariably, when white theology attempts to speak to blacks about Jesus Christ, the gospel is presented in the light of the social, political, and economic interests of the white majority. (One example of this is the interpretation of Christian love as nonviolence.) Black theologians must work to destroy the corruptive influence of white thought by building theology on sources and a norm that are appropriate to the black community.[85]

The difficulty of thinking theologically about everyday events in the work world, in our personal lives, in our marriage and family relationships, in issues of social or public policy — even in the church, is daunting.[86] "How to Think Theologically begins with the premise that all Christians are theologians, simply because they are Christian. The question is not whether or not you are a theologian – you are! – but how adequate the resulting theological reflection is in light of the Christian faith."[87] "A responsible theologian is informed by circumstances and events but not pushed around by them. A

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[83] Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation,* 22.

[84] Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 23.

[85] Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation,* 23.

[86] Howard W. Stone and James O. Duke, *How to Think Theologically,* Third ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), xiii.

[87] Stone and Duke, *How to Think Theologically,* xiv.

responsible theologian is guided by deliberations on the historic themes of faith, by Scripture and tradition, by worship, and by engaged service in the world."[88]

"The ultimate goal of the process is the maturing of our theological understanding. We listen and question and at last bring things together, fashioning conclusions that we set forth in our statements of belief and realize in our actions. These conclusions are important decisions of faith."[89] "They are in a true sense firmly held. Yet in another, equally true sense they always remain tentative, ready for retesting as our journey in faith continues. The cycle of reflection is continually in motion. We probe and wait, ask, and receive, decide, and act."[90] "Listening involves an active waiting that allows new information in, is prepared to be surprised, and remains open to the illumination of the Spirit. Questioning is a corrective to complacency — the danger of becoming satisfied with old answers and preconceptions."[91] "We subject our own answers of yesterday to fresh questioning in order to embrace new situations and new insights. The aim of listening is receptivity; the aim of questioning is honesty."[92] "Every aspect of the life of the church and its members is a theological testimony. So too are the particular ways Christians have of relating to what is around them, their styles of

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[88] Stone and Duke, *How to Think Theologically,* xiv.

[89] Stone and Duke, *How to Think Theologically,* xiv.

[90] Stone and Duke, *How to Think Theologically,* xiv.

[91] Stone and Duke, *How to Think Theologically,* xiv.

[92] Stone & Duke, *How to Think Theologically,* xiv.

interacting with others and the world."[93]

Nancy Thomas writes through the lens of mission in relation to narrative,

> God is a storytelling God. Deeper than this, God is the creator of story and it is in the context of story that God calls us into mission. God bids us follow his footprints. God asks us to realign our scripts to that of the Protagonist of God's story (mission of the Way), to enter deeply into the setting of the story (mission in the way), and to do our part in moving the plot forward to its glorious climax (mission on the way). These are the narrative tasks of mission theology, as we integrate being, living, working, speaking, reflecting, and writing in the many contexts of the world.[94]

"Narrative, of course, refers to story. Its crucial elements are characters who move through time and space, confronting obstacles and advancing toward resolution. Narrative theology has been called 'discourse about God in the setting of story.'"[95] "It combines form (narrative) with content (theology)in a creative way that seeks to understand God and God's dealings with the human race in terms of events that have happened, conflicts that have been resolved, people who have been transformed-in short, in terms of stories."[96]

"One of the limitations of narrative theology as it has developed in the West is that the combination of narrative form with theological content has often left out the area of context. The writings of some theologians in majority-world contexts challenge this limitation."[97] "A narrative missiology would look at the storied interaction of form, content and context-as people live out their stories of transformation in the specific

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[93] Stone and Duke, *How to Think Theologically,* 1-2.

[94] Charles E. Van Engen, Nancy Thomas, and Robert Gallagher, *Footprints of God: A Narrative Theology of Mission* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, a division of World Vision, 2011), 225.

[95] Engen, Thomas, and Gallagher, *Footprints of God,* 225-226.

[96] Engen, Thomas, and Gallagher, *Footprints of God*, 226.

[97] Engen, Thomas, and Gallagher, *Footprints of God*, 226.

contexts of their own cultures and faith communities. Thus, missiology has much it could add to enrich the concept of narrative theology."[98]

Theory and History

We are living in the age of the Narrative. "Narrative is widely celebrated and studied for its ubiquity and importance. Doctors, lawyers, psychologists, businessmen and women, politicians, and political pundits of all stripes and groups now regard narrative as the Queen of Discourses and an essential component of their work."[99] "These groups acknowledge narrative's power to capture certain truths and experiences that other modes of explanation and analysis such as statistics, descriptions, summaries, and reasoning via conceptual abstractions cannot. 'Narrative explanation,' 'narrative understanding,' 'narrative as a way of thinking,' and 'narrative identity' have become common currency in conversations."[100] "As a result of the Narrative Turn, narrative theory now takes as its objects of study narrative of all kinds of media throughout history: personal, political, historical, legal, and medical narratives . . . in their ancient, medieval, early modern, and postmodern guises . . . oral, print, visual (film, sculpture, painting, performance), digital and multi-media formats."[101]

> In this way, narrative theory has gone much further down the road that Scholes and Kellogg travelled in 1966. While they persuasively located the then dominant object of narrative study, the novel, within a much broader history and

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[98] Engen, Thomas, and Gallagher, *Footprints of God*, 226.

[99] Robert Scholes, James Phelan, and Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (New York, NY. Oxford University Press, 2006), 1-33.

[100] Phelan, *The Nature of Narrative,* 2.

[101] Phelan, *The Nature of Narrative,* 2.

> understanding of literary narrative, contemporary narrative theory now locates literary narrative within a much broader conception of narrative itself. This change has two main consequences for the study of literary narrative.[102]

"(1) Theories derived from a focus on literary narrative, including theories about plot, character, and narrative discourse, have a potentially greater significance even as they are subject to a more rigorous scrutiny."[103] "Such theories can contribute substantially to the conversation about how and why narrative is such a distinctive and powerful mode for explaining experience and organizing knowledge. But such theories are also subject to the test of whether they apply only to the special case of literary narrative."[104] "(2) Theories developed in connection with other kinds of narrative can cast new light on literary narrative, whether by highlighting similarities, emphasizing differences, or leading to revised understandings of literary narrative itself."[105]

"What people think about God cannot be divorced from their place and time in a definite history and culture. While God may exist in some heavenly city beyond time and space, human beings cannot transcend history. They are limited to the specificity of their finite nature."[106] "And even when theologians claim to point beyond history because of the possibility given by the Creator of history, the divine image disclosed in their language is shaped by their place in time."[107] "Theology is subjective speech about God,

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[102] Phelan, *The Nature of Narrative,* 2.

[103] Phelan, *The Nature of Narrative,* 2.

[104] Phelan, *The Nature of Narrative,* 2.

[105] Phelan, *The Nature of Narrative,* 2.

[106] Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 37.

[107] Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 37.

a speech that tells us far more about the hopes and dreams of certain God-talkers than about the Maker and Creator of heaven and earth."[108]

"It is with something like narrativity in mind that Aristotle acknowledged that to make decisions about what belongs and does not belong in a given narrative, a decision made on the basis of what an event is and on the basis of how those events ultimately fit together into a plotted whole."[109] "Insofar as those choices both are governed by the demands of interest, form, or genre and ultimately determine what form the narrative discourse will take, they will determine the nature of the narrative itself."[110]

Conclusion

Most definitions of narrative do tend to assume one or another relation between events and the representation of events: Gerard Genette writes that

> If one agrees, following convention, to confine oneself to the domain of literary expression, one will define narrative without difficulty as the representation of an event or sequence of events, real or fictitious by means of language and, more particularly, by means of written language.[111]

Marie-Laure Ryan notes that "most narratologist agree that narrative consists of material signs, the *discourse*, which convey a certain meaning (or content), the *story*, and fulfill a certain social function."[112] Jonathan Augustine's imagery of gumbo to express an

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[108] Cone, *God of the Oppressed,* 37.

[109] Kent Puckett, *Narrative Theory: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 28.

[110] Puckett, *Narrative Theory,* 28.

[111] Puckett, *Narrative Theory ,*5.

[112] Puckett, *Narrative Theory ,*5.

egalitarian community is superb as he writes, “Different types of seafood and different types of meat make for good gumbo, just as different types of people and different types of perspectives from different types of people make for a cohesively functioning society and church.”[113]

In closing, narrative theory and story-telling serve as powerful tools that bring people together, transcending the barriers that often keep us apart. They are bridges that connect us all. When individuals, guided by courage and compassion, follow the example of Jesus in the gospel according to Mark 1:35-42, and venture into neighboring communities where the residents may not resemble them, sit down, engage in meaningful conversations, and share their truths, the journey of conciliation begins. The walls of separation start to crumble. However, this is not the end of the road. There comes a crucial moment when America must demonstrate “fruit worthy of repentance”[114] for true racial healing and atonement to take root.

It is what Duke L. Kwon and Gregory Thompson call “reparative work of love.”[115] America has to atone for the sin of white supremacy, work toward growing a Godly kindom on earth through the process of conciliation and the practice of true story-telling. That is what builds an egalitarian community. “Community is difficult in any circumstance; to create and sustain it is an achievement worthy of honor.”[116] But it is especially difficult in the context of an American nation marked by a legacy of pervasive

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[113] Augustine, Willimon, and Curry, *Called to Reconciliation*, 17.

[114] Matthew and Luke 3:8.

[115] Duke L. Kwon and Gregory Thompson, *Reparation: A Christian Call for Repentance and Repair* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2021). 187.

[116] Kwon and Thompson, 188.

multigenerational theft perpetrated by one group against another, a context in which the manifold harms of theft are alive among us.[117] As Anasa Troutman puts it, "Reparations begins with the acknowledgment that we are all connected, that we harm and are harmed, that we need to restore the other person, do the work to help make them whole so that they have the same access to love, wealth, and choices that we have. Reparations is fundamentally relational work."[118]

Finally, Martin Luther King, Jr., in his March on Washington famous speech titled, "I Have A Dream," speaks to the subject of economic justice for Black people and how it was a priority.

> Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. So we have come here today to dramatize a shameful condition. In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked 'insufficient funds.'[119]

King continues, "But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation.[120] So we have come to cash this check — a check that will give us upon demand

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[117] Kwon and Thompson, *Reparations*, 188.

[118] Kwon and Thompson, 189.

[119] Martin Luther King, Jr., *I Have Dream*, Lincoln Memorial, Washington DC: August 28, 1963.

[120] King, Jr., *I Have Dream.*

the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now."[121]

Now is the time to lead America, the so-called United States of America, to truly be united. My project, "Racial Atonement as Prophetic Activism: Growing the Kin-dom of God through Conciliation," is a mechanism for the racial and generational healing process, and the following project is the beginning of the process.

[121] King Jr., *I Have Dream.*

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

More than fifty years ago, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. made a profound observation that still holds true today, "Eleven o'clock on Sunday morning is the most segregated hour of America."[1]This statement has weighed heavily on my heart for a considerable time. Therefore, after much prayer and prophetic activist work, the Lord revealed to me, "Racial Atonement as Prophetic Activism" as a path to healing the racial divide amongst churches and mending the generational schism within them. Some readers of this document may wonder why racial atonement not racial reconciliation. Here is how I answer that crucial question: race is not absolute; it is a social construct birthed out of the ideology of white supremacy. Therefore, how can something not real be reconciled in that there is no biological evidence or scriptural reference that proves the hierarchy of any group of human bodies over another group of human beings.

As I read Genesis chapter one, I see and understand where God created humanity in God's image and gave humanity dominion over God's earth and creatures. Yet, God does not give humanity dominion over one another. In addition, my African ancestors

[1] Martin Luther Kings, Jr., https://www.google.com/search?q=Eleven+o%E2%80%99clock+on+Sunday+morning+is+the+most+segregated+hour+of+America&oq=Eleven+o%E2%80%99clock+on+Sunday+morning+is+the+most+segregated+hour+of+America&aqs=chrome..69i57.2157j0j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8.

were brought to America in chains as enslaved people by people identified as white. How can enslavers and enslaved people be reconciled when they were never in a perfect union? How can "chattel" enslavement be reconciled to Christianity? How can Christianity be reconciled to Jim and Jane Crow? It is contradictory. Further, sin separates us from God and one another; therefore, when unjust systems are in place and practiced to separate humanity, it is a sin; sin is separation.

The implementation of racial atonement is a mechanism for repairing, healing, and restoring the separation of human bodies based on the color of skin and age at Purdue University and the Greater Lafayette Community. My hope is that when properly implemented, racial atonement will get us back to God's original plan for humanity to be in a community celebrating our diversity.

I investigated four central sections in the foundational chapters for this project: Biblical, Historical, Theological, and Interdisciplinary. The Biblical Foundations investigates God's complaint against the children of Israel in Micah 6:1-8. The Historical Foundations examined W.E.B. Du Bois and the Niagara Movement (predecessor to the NAACP), and Marcus Garvey's Pan-African Movement, University Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). These organizations attempted racial reconciliation. The Theological Foundations explores liberation theology through the lens of freedom fighters, liberationists, and abolitionists, particularly Black people. The Interdisciplinary Foundations, which is essential for racial atonement, interweave the importance of narrative theory (storytelling), which connects humanity to humanity regardless of our diversity. These four central points are crucial for the implementation and success of this

project. “Racial Atonement as Prophetic Activism from the Cross to the Community” is for the individual aspiration to social and communal transformation.

Although I am not a prophet, through the lens of a biblical prophet, I am a twenty-first century prophetic activist burdened by the segregation of ethnicities by the church and the separation of generations within the church. Racial atonement is a method for healing schisms. Therefore, to do this work, I stand on the shoulders of breathing ancestor liberationists and freedom fighters such as Jesus (Yeshua – “Jehovah is salvation”), Claudette Colvin, Jeremiah A. Wright, Iva Carruthers, Otis Moss, Jr., and Emily Townes — just to name a few. I also stand on the shoulders of sleeping abolitionists Nat Turner, John Brown, Harriett Tubman, and Frederick Douglas; sleeping liberationist James H. Cone; and freedom fighters like Ida B. Wells Barnett and Fannie Lou Hamer. In addition, there are ministers of the liberation gospel: Henry H. Garnet, Nathaniel Paul, Henry McNeal Turner, and Daniel A. Payne. While I stand on these broad and robust shoulders, I do this work for the betterment of our descendants so that they will join a desegregated, inseparable church that acknowledges the interrelatedness and interdependence of humanity.

The Holy Spirit, in collaboration with the “Prophetic Activism from the Cross to the Community cohort,” in addition to the ancestors, has empowered me to be strong and courageous as I seek to play a role in transforming the universal church through racial atonement. However, I also understand and will acknowledge that all so-called identified Christians will not want any part of racial atonement. Yet, I have learned to no longer focus on who chooses not to come to the table but only work with those present at the table where all are welcomed. This project is a clarion call to the universal church to lead

the way to racial and generational healing through racial atonement amongst Christ's followers, to be an example in this world of people collaborating and demonstrating togetherness in this world that desperately needs it. I hope and pray that this project appropriately provides details of the methodology used, implementation style, summary of learning, and suggestions for the future embodiment of the church.

Methodology

Hypothesis and Statement of the Problem

This project hypothesizes that if members of the Greater Lafayette community, which includes Purdue University students, participate in the racial atonement process, then they will be equipped with an apparatus to begin addressing the racial animus and segregation in that community. The problem in the Greater Lafayette community (Tippecanoe County), Indiana, is tribalism. Churches are segregated by race and rarely collaborate. In addition, at Purdue University, where there are multitudes of ethnic diversity, students gather amongst themselves based on their race, age, ethnicity, or religious affiliation. Therefore, there is little to no space for cross-cultural communication, authentic and interfaith dialogues, or sharing of personal narratives. Racial atonement prepares faith leaders to move with bowels of mercies (compassion) across their boundaries and engage with believers from different racial and age categories to tear down religious segregated and separated walls that divide and build bridges that connect.

Research Model and Participants

The research model consists of six African American men. One serves as a pastor. There are four Euro-American men where two serve or have served as pastors. There are two Euro-American women where one serves as first lady. One person is a Latinx woman, and one is an African American woman who serves as pastor. It is important to note that three generations were represented. All participants are well aware of the racial and generational tension within the churches they serve or attend and in the broader community. All but one participant identifies as a Christian. The one African American male identifies with the Baha'i faith tradition. That is crucial because it is a demonstration that racial atonement goes beyond the barriers that separate us racially, generationally, and religiously. All participants also have cognitive aspects and are predisposed to heal these divisions, yet they come short of the conative to make transformative social and communal changes. My method to recruit participants was soliciting individuals through direct phone calls and in-person meetings. For those who agreed to participate, I then sent an email for confirmation (see Appendix A) and instructions. Afterward, I emailed the instruction that all sessions would be virtual via Zoom, the number of sessions with dates, and the start time. Other pastors would have liked to participate in this project; however, there were summer scheduling conflicts.

The data collection method included a few gathering areas: an interview question pre-and post-survey questionnaires (see Appendix C and D), personal interviews, and reflection journaling. Each method assisted me, the researcher, to arrive at answers relevant to the problem statement and to substantiate the hypothesis.

Instruments Used for the Research Study

I wanted to engage in various measures to foster insight to help all participants feel comfortable and vulnerable so that I could get honest feedback in each session. I also made it clear the racial atonement process is a place of bravery and a safe space.

1. The interview question allowed the participants to speak about their reasons for choosing to participate in Racial Atonement training.
2. The Pre-Survey Questionnaire served as a mechanism for the lead investigator and the participants to understand particular terms crucial for the success of Racial Atonement.
3. The Post-purvey questionnaire informed the lead investigator and the participants of their new understanding and growth of the same terms and assisted in the confirmation of changes.
4. Journaling and weekly session discussions served as a time for pondering and dialogue where all participants had the opportunity to share their thoughts about the topic for that evening. Again, this allowed for open and honest dialogue amongst participants from different ages, ethnicities, cultures, socioeconomic statuses, and faith traditions in a brave and safe context.
5. Post-interview, particularly with pastors, gave the lead investigator information on what changes would be made in their church or ministry context.

Anticipated Impact on Participants

As I continue to contemplate the state of the Greater Lafayette Community, visit local churches, and peruse the streets, I am for these outcomes and impact on this

community. First, this project is designed to be a bridge that draws people together from different ethnic backgrounds, generational differences, and faith traditions continually for years to come; they will move from their comfort to the other side of being uncomfortable. Second, once they are in the same space, I expect the racial healing process to start by relationship building, then in the walls of distrust, hostility, and animus toward the other to be diminished. Third, there may be an identification of naming of the racial and generational divide within the body of Christ. Awareness of our racial biases, and hopefully, a more equitable society, will begin as a result of this project. Fourth, identification of the racial and generational healing in their respective church may come about. Fifth, at the end of the Racial Atonement experience, I hope and pray that the pastors and people involved will continue to grow in their relationships that began during this project.

> Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also, for that is what I came out to do…" Now a leper came to him (Mark 1:38, 40a).

Implementation

This segment of the project analysis is the execution of the project I used for the research data and to gather data for the hypothesis. This shows the steps taken before the research study began and the seven weeks of interconnectedness, learning, and sharing. As the lead examiner, I was each session's servant leader and facilitator. We started with the notion that we would meet for six sessions; each sitting would last one and a half to two hours. However, by the fifth session, I realized we would need another session after the sixth session. Therefore, I explained that to the participants, and most could attend

another week. Also, although we started with fourteen participants, three could only make some sessions due to scheduling. All sessions began with a gospel song and prayer to shift the atmosphere and settle our hearts, minds, souls, and spirits. Likewise, all sessions ended in the same fashion. I started the research project on Thursday, June 6, 2024, and finished on Thursday, July 25, 2024. Due to the July 4 holiday landing on a Thursday, we skipped that week. The project concluded with how I as the researcher collected the data from the participants according to the regulations of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of United Theological Seminary.

Initial Steps

The project started initially after being approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of United Theological Seminary. Once I made it through the IRB process, I began recruiting participants. I had conversations with each individual about the project, emphasizing the importance of participation and the commitment deemed essential for the success of this doctoral research project. I also explained that this process of racial healing is not through racial reconciliation but through Racial Atonement, and the need for ethnic and generational diversity is vital to the Racial Atonement process to make an impactful difference in relationships in the Greater Lafayette community. Once I received confirmation from the fourteen participants, I sent them individually an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix B). Afterward, we had our first meeting with an icebreaker to get relationships started.

Participants were then given the interview question. On the start date of the study, due-to scheduling conflict, all but one participant was present. The one who missed had

the option to view the recording on Zoom or receive the first session questions by email. The participants also received nine initial questions to answer immediately and the same nine questions were asked at the end of the seventh session for the purpose of measuring the differences gleaned by each participant from the pre-survey questionnaire to ascertain how much they had learned and/or grown for having participated in this project.

Professional and Contextual Associates

The professional and contextual associates assisted in a multitude of ways. The level at which they added to this whole process is immeasurable, and they continue to challenge and support me. I met with each professional associate for guidance and support as needed. They were excellent at their roles and were always open to conversations, challenging me to be clear, precise, and firm on my stance and knowledge of why Racial Atonement before racial reconciliation. Equally important was for me to be an excellent listener to the participants. I was also encouraged to understand the participant's position on the complex terms we discussed. Lastly, the professional associates warned me not to get into debates or arguments but to stay on topic about the essential and existential issue of dignity and full humanity of all for connectivity.

The contextual associates were involved throughout the entire project process. A few of them participated in the research project and were very helpful. I needed their contribution for encouragement to continue and their constructive critique of my document and its development. One particular contextual associate, who was not available to participate during the project, has the cognitive (education), the affection (heart), and the conation (will to do) compatible with mine in this complex community to

heal the racial tension amongst church leaders and pastors. They demonstrated their love for humanity through their actions in the community. I know this by having firsthand experience working alongside them and seeing them share their resources of time, talent, and treasure to bring the collective of faith leaders who are community stakeholders to collaborate for this project's success. In addition, they encouraged me not to be discouraged by the lack of pastors and faith leaders who do not want to participate nor want the people they serve in their church context to participate.

Finally, both professional and contextual associates enhanced my vision. They encouraged me to be strong and courageous, as God repeatedly said to Joshua: the strength and courage to go to the other side, where there are people unlike me, face the immoral and unethical original sin of America, white supremacy, that produced race, racism, racial segregation, and separation in churches amongst the so-called body of believers.

Weekly Session Overview

Week 1: June 6th

The seven-week project started with an icebreaker that served as a formal introduction for the participants. I have previous experience using this method to bring comfort, energy, and vulnerability to people in unfamiliar territory. In addition, they get to see, feel, and know that their voice matters in the community. The question to break the ice was: what would it be if you had the power (magic wand) to change one spiritual/social ill in the world?

Once we broke the ice, we agreed on a group covenant that included but was not limited to what is said here, stays here, respecting, appreciating, and perhaps celebrating differences, being willing to take risks, and being comfortable being uncomfortable. I explained that racial healing, particularly Racial Atonement, will sometimes be uncomfortable. Following the group covenant, I asked why you decided to participate in this project.

Afterward, I decided to introduce Racial Atonement and how it came to me. In other words, I explained what brought me here, which started at undergraduate school, graduate/seminary, and now in a doctoral program where I had to write a spiritual autobiography, a contextual analysis, then a synergy paper that led me to this Racial Atonement project. I also shared briefly all four theological papers. From there, I led a discussion review on a few First Testament scriptures, starting with 2 Chronicles 7:14, a calling to God's people. Then, in Isaiah 58:12c, God's people shall be called "repairers of the breach, the restorer of streets." These two scriptures led us to the Biblical Foundations' scripture for this project, Micah 6:6-8, particularly verse 8. We spent a little time on this text because it commands us to do the work: "He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?"

Afterward, we discussed two Second Testament scriptures, Matt. 6:10, focusing on God's kingdom in relation to Kin-dom on earth amongst humanity. From there, using Mark 1:35, we briefly discussed the meaning of going to the other side of town to engage and develop relationships with people unlike us. Finally, going back to the Biblical Foundations' text, I introduced them to the spiritual practice of *Lectio Divina* using

Micah 6:6-8. Unfortunately, we ran out of the allotted time for this session. Therefore, we closed with a song and prayer. This first session was vital to laying the foundation for this project. By starting with a song, prayer, and an ice-breaker, then closing with the spiritual practice *Lectio Divina*, a song and prayer, helped to ease the participant's anxiety, concerns, and reluctance they may have had about participating.

Week 2: June 13th

As principal examiner, I started this session by reminding the participants of expectations of writing down all their answers to the questions asked each week, journaling weekly about their experience, and that I will be collecting their answers and journals for data collection and gathering information to measure the outcome of this project. I also reminded them that Racial Atonement takes a communal effort; we are a diverse community; and we all matter the same. In addition, all information gathered by the principal examiner will be kept confidential; there is no need to be concerned about their names or journals getting out to the public. Then I took the opportunity to show appreciation to the youngest generation represented (millennials). I reinforced to them that our efforts here are to leave this world a better place for them and all descendants. It was time to discuss the pre-survey questionnaire key terms that ground the framework for Racial Atonement. I asked the participants to define these terms without any study or research; I wanted to know their thoughts straight from their heads. The terms are racism, segregation, reconciliation, atonement, kingdomship, and kin-domship. In addition, I asked, in what ways does racism and segregation show itself in the congregation and

community you serve, and historically, in what ways has Christianity played a role in sustaining racism?

I first wanted them to recognize that all the terms that will be discussed are verbs. However, before discussing the primary terms, I wanted to hear their understanding of sin as a position and practice.

Week 3: June 20th

This session was the shortest one. We started as we normally do with a song and prayer by one of the participants. Afterwards we reviewed the participants' definitions on racism, segregation, reconciliation, atonement, kingdomship, and kin-domship. This was followed by the questions: in what ways does racism and segregation show itself in the congregation and community you serve, and historically, in what ways has Christianity played a role in sustaining racism? I then moved to discussing the Historical Foundations chapter to show an attempt and its failure to challenge America to be who she claims to be — a place where "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."[2] I shared briefly about W.E.B. Du Bois and the Niagara Movement (the predecessor to the NAACP), and Marcus Garvey's Pan-African Movement, University Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). These social movements were engines over one hundred years ago that sought a level of racial reconciliation at worst and at best challenged America to be the democracy it claims and sought human equality. In addition, I reminded the participants that if "Racial Atonement" is going to be successful,

[2] These words are enshrined in the nation's Constitution/Bill or of Rights.

it has to be communal; therefore, we have to collectively name our communal sins. We then closed with a prophetic song and prayer of repentance.

Week 4: June 27th

Following a song and prayer this week, I began defining the core terms for the project. The first term was race and racism. I declared that race is a social construct, not rooted in biology like ancestry. Many Africans believe in reincarnation; historically, generationally, epigenetically, we believe our ancestors carry on living through us. Race is a social and made-up construct post Bacon's Rebellion of 1676 to 1677.[3] Although not real, racism is very real in the ways it harms humanity, and when we harm humanity, we also harm God; "just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."[4] Racism is systemic and practiced within institutions. This is why in Memphis, Tennessee, five African American police officers beat to death an African American male; racism, a byproduct of white supremacy, is intuitional and many times shows up in Black face.

I then discussed "Racial Atonement" through the lens of a few questions: where are we as a nation concerning race relations, how did we get here, and where do we go from here? Then we watched a video that is part of a series entitled Vital Conversations: An Interactive Video Series on Today's Realities of Race and Racism by the General Commission on Religion and Race of The United Methodist Church. This video is

[3] Bacon's Rebellion (1676-1677) was an armed rebellion by Virginia settlers It was led by Nathaniel Bacon against Colonial Governor William Berkeley after Berkeley refused Bacon's request to drive Native American Indians out of Virginia, https://encyclopediavirginia.org.entries › bacons-rebel.

[4] Matthew 25:40c.

entitled “Deconstructing White Privilege with Dr. Robin DiAngelo.” After watching, we discussed some of what Dr. DiAngelo said about racism. A crucial question was asked during the conversation: can black people be racist? Some participants said yes, but most did not have an answer. I responded Black people as a whole cannot be racist because they do not have the power domestically to determine the outcome of life: educationally, politically, through real estate, and health. Black people do not have the power to decide if others live or die. However, although Black people as a whole cannot be racist, they can be bigots, prejudiced, discriminate, and participate in perpetuating racism and racist ideas.

Following the DiAngelo discussion, we watched two videos about car and bicycle theft. These videos were experiments where one character was a black male, and the other was a white male pretending to steal. These videos were necessary for the project participants to watch because the videos sparked a conversation about our own implicit biases and how we think differently as a community when the perpetrators are Black versus White. These videos also show how systemic and embedded racist ideas are in our minds. Afterward, we closed in song and prayer.

Week 5: July 11th

After song and prayer, I reemphasized my theme statement and hypothesis: “Racial Atonement as Prophetic Activism: Growing or Building the Kin-dom of God through Conciliation. The intent of this work was to cultivate a kinship of believers in Jesus Christ to heal the ethnic or racial and generational schism in the church. By reclaiming the tradition of the oral and aural tradition of storytelling, I believe the body of

believers will connect across our differences, whether they are racial, cultural, or generational barriers, creating a less segregated and polarized church culture. This project hypothesized that if members, all of you, of the greater Lafayette community, participate in a focus group or sessions that we have been doing the past four weeks, focusing on the interconnectivity of kinship and Kingdomship, then they will be equipped with tools to begin addressing the racial segregation and generational separation in the community. The human-to-human racial conflict will inevitably continue if the body of Christ believers do not take the leading responsibility to create a society where we can coexist on some level of harmony. Although all humanity has a role in racial healing, Racial Atonement is a solution so that we can all coexist. It is an arduous task, but we can do it!

From there, I began defining these terms as I (the primary investigator) understood them through the scriptures. I started with sin. The way I believe it, there is a sin state or condition that all humanity is birthed into, followed by sin practices. What I mean by the sin state condition is that all humanity is born from Adam, meaning humanity; humanity comes out of the first human beings, who were created, not born, but disobeyed God making the sin state for all humankind. In the Christian tradition, one of the Christian concepts is that we need Jesus to get back into a right relationship with God. I referenced Romans 5:12-19. Therefore, I see us in a sinful state because Jesus' death provides the removal of the barrier sin created between humanity and divinity. One human being caused the break between the perfect union, Divinity (God), and humanity. Perfect union is an important concept when we discuss reconciliation. The sin practice is missing the mark of God's standards. In addition, sin separates as we talk about kingdomship, the vertical relationship with God, and horizontal relationships with one

another is kin-ship. The cross is both vertical and horizontal, and sin disconnects us from God and one another. This is why segregated churches are sinful; separated members of local churches are sinful. I also referenced the psalmist: "Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me."[5]

Finally, I reiterated sin is not just an individual act but also a communal practice. The data shows that two-thirds of our dear white brothers and sisters self-segregate in practice. We practice things based on a condition of how we have been socially conditioned to think about other people. Socially, it does not matter what race or ethnicity you are. We all have been socially conditioned through the same lens of white "pseudo" supremacy, which I believe is the original sin of America that produced all these isms that keep us segregated on Sundays and separated weekly.

Atonement or (at-one-ment)

The emphasis is on "at-one-ment" to atonement, and the sacrifice involved primarily from self-proclaimed Christian white brothers and sisters, who must play a role in the route to atonement. Sacrifice is crucial in the atonement practice, "For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."[6] Atonement, according to Eleonore Stump, in her book *Atonement*, quotes Linda Radzik's definition: "To atone is to undergo some kind of pain or sacrifice

[5] Psalm 51:5.

[6] Psalm 51:16-17.

for wrongful acts."[7] Atonement means to cover, to purge, to make an atonement, to make reconciliation, by blood sacrifice.

Sacrifice

It symbolized the individual's repentance and willingness to make things right in the spiritual and human realm. There were different types of offerings related to sacrifices to emphasize the importance of seeking forgiveness, renewal, and restoration in one's relationship with God and others. They were burnt offering, grain offering, peace offering, sin offering, and guilt offerings to name a few. Ultimately, Jesus took on the sins of the world and offered himself as the perfect sacrifice for humankind's atonement.

Righteousness and Justice

> Justice, 'mišpāṭ, a verdict' Obery Hendricks asserts, 'the Greek word dikaiosune …as 'justice' rather than the usual 'righteousness.' The students of biblical Greek know, the term can be translated either way. However, unlike 'righteousness,' with its strictly one-dimensional personal moral implications, 'justice' connotes more than individual piety. It also means holistic, collective – that is, social – righteousness. Hendricks continues, 'Because of Jesus holistic spirituality, his use of dikaiosune in these and many of the other sayings in which it is found should be understood as encompassing both of the term's meanings, that is, personal righteousness and social justice.'[8]

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[7] Eleonore Stump, *Atonement*, First ed. Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 7.

[8] Obery M. Hendricks, *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of the Teachings of Jesus and How They Have Been Corrupted*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2006), 18.

Reconciliation

The key letters in this word are "re." I believe you cannot reconcile when there is no perfect union. Since Euro-Americans were enslavers, and Africans and African Americans were enslaved people, what can be reconciled, particularly when it comes to racial reconciliation since race is a social construct? I believe you cannot reconcile what never was and what is fake. On the other hand, conciliation can be practiced through concepts such as "Racial Atonement." Through the "Racial Atonement" approach, hostility, animus, and repentance are required of our white sisters and brothers. Then, our Black sisters can rid themselves of righteous indignation, healthy anger, unhealthy resentment, and unforgiveness. We then closed in song and prayer.

Week 6: July 18th

In our typical fashion, we started with a song and pray. Then, we moved to these terms for discussion: economic repair, recompense, restitution, and fruits of repentance; these terms are crucial to the phrase "Racial Atonement." I started with the calling for the demonstration of repentance using these biblical texts: Matthew 3:1-10 and Luke 3:1-9. Then, we surveyed these scriptures: Genesis 32:3-5; 13-15; 19-21, Nehemiah 5:1-13, and Luke 19:1-9, to show demonstrations of the fruit of repentance. We discussed where we go from here and our ideas for getting there. I shared a video, "Cracking the Codes: The System of Racial Inequity: A Trip to the Grocery Store" by Dr. Joy DeGruy to demonstrate how Euro-Americans can use their white privilege for the good. Before closing, I showed a piece of rope, tan in color, made of flexible fibers twisted together. Then, I asked the participants what this rope represented. Immediately, participant 2 said

lynching. I responded, today, I am challenging us to reimagine this rope as a blessed tie that binds us together rather than a noose of hate, terror, destruction, or brutality to death. Can we reimagine the meaning of this rope? Afterward, I led the group through a breathing exercise. This was followed by a song and prayer of repentance for the ancestors who harmed Black bodies with one of the worst violations against humanity in human history: chattel enslavement, Jim and Jane Crow lynching, and all other forms of oppression.

Week 7: July 25th

In this final session, I briefly presented my Interdisciplinary Foundations chapter, "Narrative Theory." Narrative Theory is a vital spiritual practice towards conciliation. For us to lessen our fear of the other, our animus toward the other and our distrust for one another, we have to sit face to face, share our stories, and listen to each other; it is a call to the spiritual practice of connectivity by reclaiming the oral and aural storytelling tradition. However, before pairing the participants, I shared with them the seven dimensions of liberation proposed by Anne E. Streaty Wimberly. These seven dimensions of liberation are interrelated and crucial to the "Story-Linking Process." They are,

> spiritual liberation, ethical liberation, material liberation, sociopolitical liberation, psychosocial liberation, educational liberation, and communal liberation that are interrelated and crucial to the story. Lincoln process. spiritual liberation, ethical liberation, material liberation, sociopolitical liberation, psychosocial liberation, and communal liberation stories liberate us. Stories connect us regardless of where we come from.[9]

[9] Wimberly, *Soul Stories*, 9-11.

Afterward, I shared one of my favorite songs in storytelling fashion by Hip-Hop artist Rakim, "In the Ghetto."[10] Then, I shared my story before partnering the participants. After they had finished, they gave some responses to their experience. P1 said that "listening to the stories of Black people is what convinced me that racism is real and present today in America. Therefore, I'm incredibly committed to community building through sharing stories and I enjoyed getting to know P5 better. However, I didn't come away from the meeting with any sense of what "Narrative Theory" really is. So, I'll need to read up on that some more." P2 said that "stories connect us." P3 said that "we need to reimagine to bring us together; our stories connect us." P1 said that "I shared our stories and I am committed to staying in contact."

P7, the primary investigator (Rodney), shared his story. "It gave me a much deeper appreciation of who he is and how God developed him into that person. It saddens me to hear Rodney talk about how much he disliked living in Indiana because he has so much to share, what he calls his purpose. He has been instrumental in my spiritual growth and brought me along to be an anti-racist. His vulnerability in sharing his story opened the door for the rest of us to share with another person in the group. I was blessed to be paired with P3. Not that the six weeks of the atonement project have not been worthwhile, but the development of relationships in the process has been a high point. I am glad Rodney took the extra week so we could do this. P8, I was surprised by how meaningful my conversations during this exercise were! It was lovely to hear the story of another and have someone hear my story, as well. I am embarrassed to say how much I did not want to engage at that point, but many of my prejudgments about the people I was

[10] Eric B. and Rakim, "Let the Rhythm Hit 'Em," YouTube Video, September 29, 1990.

paired with in the exercise proved incorrect. Listening to one another is one of the most helpful things we can do. Can it be that simple? Primary investigator responded absolutely, Yes!

Before closing the final session, to reiterate the importance of the spiritual practice of connectivity, I shared a biblical story that shows Jesus practicing connectivity before He went to the cross from the gospel of Mark 1:35-42, focusing on verse 38 where Jesus says, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also, for that is what I came out to do."[11] The main point of this text for the group is to inform our dear white sisters and brothers that it is time for them to get uncomfortable, go to the other side (neighboring towns) to meet people not like them. If not, their silence is complicit. It is time for Euro-American Christians and white people in general to fight for the dignity of Black people as Malcolm X championed, socially acceptable or not. But it is imperative that white folk sit, be quiet, and listen to Black people tell their stories and truth. In closing, to continue the work of "Racial Atonement," the participants promised to cultivate and nurture the relations established during the seven-week sessions. A song and prayer followed.

Summary of Learning

Finally, here are the answers and learnings that I have gathered from the participants that are measured particularly from the pre- and post-questionnaire terms. One participant was present and participated in the seven-week sessions; however, I did not receive his/her responses.

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[11] Mark 1:38.

Terms: Atonement Race/Racism Segregation

Participant #	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire
	Do the participants have a working knowledge of the term atonement?	Do the participants have a new and/or broader understanding of atonement after the sessions?	Do the participants have a working knowledge of the term race/racism?	Do the participants have a new and/or broader understanding of race/racism after the sessions?	Do the participants have a working knowledge of the term segregation?	Do the participants have a new and/or broader understanding of the term segregation after the sessions?
1	No Response	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	No Response	Yes	No Response	Yes	No Response	Yes
3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No Response	Yes
6	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Neutral	Yes	Yes
8	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Terms: Sin (state & practice) Reconciliation Conciliation

Participant #	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire
	Do the participants have a working knowledge of the term sin?	Do the participants have a new and/or broader understanding of sin after the sessions?	Do the participants have a working knowledge of the term reconciliation ?	Do the participants have a new and/or broader understanding of reconciliation after the sessions?	Do the participants have a working knowledge of the term conciliation?	Do the participants have a new and/or broader understanding of the term conciliation after the sessions?
1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No Response	Yes
2	No Response	Yes	No Response	Yes	No Response	Yes
3	No Response	Yes	No Response	Yes	No Response	Yes
4	No Response	Yes	Yes	Yes	No Response	Yes
5	No Response	Yes	Yes	Yes	No Response	Yes
6	No Response	Yes	Yes	Yes	No Response	Yes
7	No Response	Yes	Yes	Yes	No Response	Yes
8	No Response	Yes	Yes	Yes	No Response	Yes

Terms: Kingdom Kindom/Kinship Economic Repair

Participant #	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire
	Do the participants have a working knowledge of the term kingdom?	Do the participants have a new and/or broader understanding of kingdom after the sessions?	Do the participants have a working knowledge of the term kindom?	Do the participants have a new and/or broader understanding of kindom after the sessions?	Do the participants have a working knowledge of the term economic repair?	Do the participants have a new and/or broader understanding of the term economic repair after the sessions?
1	No Response	Yes	No Response	Yes	No Response	Yes
2	No Response	Yes	No Response	Yes	No Response	Yes
3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No Response	Yes
4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No Response	Yes
5	No Response	Yes	No Response	Yes	No Response	Yes
6	Yes	Yes	No Response	Yes	No Response	Yes
7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No Response	Yes
8	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No Response	Yes

According to the above charts, the pre-questionnaire indicates that none of the participants responded to having a working knowledge of these terms: conciliation and economic repair. Therefore, they were eager to learn those concepts. After the final session, everyone had learned and could explain them. Six of the eight participants had some knowledge of the terms: atonement and reconciliation. However, only one participant responded to the term sin. Five of the eight participants acknowledged their familiarity with the term kingdom. To my surprise, four out of the eight participants were familiar with kindom, particularly the one from a non-Christian tradition. The terms race/racism and segregation were popular terms that all the participants knew, although participant two did not respond to any of the terms in the pre-questionnaire, and participant five did not respond to segregation; during the sessions, I could tell they had an understanding of them both. Participant two did not respond to any of the terms in the pre-questionnaire because, in his/her words, “I came to learn.” After the seven weeks

ended, all participants, except participant seven, either learned the concepts or had a new, broader understanding of the terms and continue to wrestle with these concepts.

Post-Survey Questionnaire /Reflection Journals

These are the post-survey questions and answers addressed by the participants: P1 through P8. Participants' responses to racism, economic justice, atonement, and kindom/kinship further demonstrate that they gained a new understanding of the terms and developed new relations (kinship) with each other by practicing narrative theory (story-telling).

Post-Questionnaire Responses to Terms: **Atonement, Race/Racism, Kindomship/Kinship, and Economic Justice**
P1 – Racism: "As a member of the majority culture, I see it now as my responsibility to bring some justice to the current situation somehow. I see the effects of racism and the present reality of it, not vividly or personally, but vicariously through the relationships I have made, and I understand it to be deleterious and egregious. I want to do something about it. Sin creates a debt…the best we can hope for is a combination of efforts toward repair (economic justice) and forgiveness being granted in return. How will white people be "forgiven" for the racism of slavery, segregation, lynching's, and all the systemic bias that persists today? What payment could compensate Black people adequately for their suffering and hardship? P2 – I have learned race is a socially made-up construct post Bacon's Rebellion 1676-77, with no biological evidence. I also learned our ancestors live through us – through our DNA and their traumas, we carry them with us. Racism ("individual acts") is very real, the way systems & institutions operate. Atonement includes, sacrifices for our wrongs, restoration of relationships (kinship) – after admission of wrong and turning around. These institutions have a role to play in atonement and economic justice: The Catholic Church, Ivy League Schools, U.S. Government, and Banks. Fruits of Repentance in relation to atonement Matt 3:1-10 and Luke 3:1-9. My proposal: White American Christians should turn away from July 4th Fireworks, since their purpose is to remind us how our country began and was continued for nearly another 110 years – on behalf of white supremacy and slavery. All Christians should turn away from military holidays and parades. P3 – My understanding of the ignorance others still have regarding racism has deepened significantly. Before, I saw racism primarily as individual acts of prejudice and discrimination—people mistreating others because of the color of their skin. But now, I see it as a vast and complex system that permeates every aspect of our society but is not exclusive to the Black community. Racism is not just about the overt acts of hatred or bias; it's about the structures and institutions that uphold racial inequality and injustice. It's the laws, policies, and practices that, whether intentionally or not, disadvantage certain racial groups while privileging others. The concept of kin-domship has taken on a richer, more profound meaning for me after this workshop. Before, I understood it as a simple idea of community, of being part of a broader family of humanity. But now, I see it as a radical reimagining of how we relate to one another—a vision of a society where the hierarchies that divide us are dismantled and relationships are built on mutual respect, care, and solidarity. Kin-domship is about recognizing our interconnectedness, not just metaphorically but efficiently and spiritually. In this context, atonement means actively engaging in repairing the harm caused by racism. It's about taking accountability for past and present injustices and committing to actions (economic justice) promoting healing. Atonement is not just about apologizing, it requires economic repair, which involves actively correcting the economic inequalities created by centuries of racism, discrimination, and exploitation.

Economic repair is not merely about charity; it's about making systemic changes that allow for fair access to resources, opportunities, and wealth for those who have been historically marginalized. The verse from Micah 6:8, which urges us "to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God," took on new meaning for me as well, highlighting that true Kingdomship requires a commitment to social justice and equality, reflecting the inclusive nature of God's reign. Kingdomship now resonates with me as the vision of a world where God's justice and love are fully realized.

P4 – I learned that race is not rooted in biology but is a social construct. I was not completely aware that most biases are unconscious, and I agree that racism is a fabric of our society. Some truths that came to light are: most white people live in segregation. The default of our country is racism. Many Whites believe that it's better to be White. I remember learning…that being non-racist is not enough – people need to be antiracist; white supremacy is the original sin of America. People have been conditioned to separation – here's a need for repentance; America needs to repent! Economic Repair: consider historically the wrong done to blacks, recompense (Atonement): consider compensation, restitution: commit to compensation. There needs to be an acknowledgment of the truth about racism. Racism is a sin against God! "Racial Atonement" is a re-imagination. Correction and reparations need to be considered. Education and property must be included in reparations, and actions confirm genuine repentance, Matthew 3:8 and Luke 3:8. Overall, I've been better equipped and energized to continue my contributions to the struggle of making things better!

P5 – Rev. Lynch pointed out that all these terms are verbs, words of action. I now view race as a socially made-up concept. There is no biological proof of differences in race, only ethnicity. Race started after the Bacon Rebellion of 1676-1677 when various ethnicities rose up against the system. All institutions can carry racist ideas, and we need to deconstruct the idea of 'color' differences. Racism = System = group prejudice backed by institutional power. All Institutions and Individuals play a role. We all have the same breath of God, therefore when we hurt each other, we hurt God. The videos helped me realize how real racism is embedded in our minds. Due to the sin of white superiority, America needs to repent, and faith leaders should lead the way. Demonstrate the Fruit of repentance. Atonement…"to undergo some kind of pain or sacrifice for wrongdoing/wrong acts" (as defined by Linda Radzik). Conciliation, to overcome hostility/hatred, is demonstrated in Luke 10:25-37. Rev. Lynch always says no reconciliation without economic repair or compensation. Our stories connect us (kinship). P1 and 1 shared our stories and committed to staying in contact. Rev. Rodney reminded us using Mark 1:35-42 that just as leprosy was a skin problem, America made race a skin problem. We must pray, hear God, go to the other side. My eyes opened up as I truly realized that race/racism and segregation is and were a sin. I knew that, but I REALLY know that after these seven weeks. Rev. Lynch compelled me to look at the need for
reconciliation/conciliation in a new light. How can we call ourselves just without being righteous? Just remember, it is the righteousness of Jesus, not of ourselves. Rev. Lynch also challenged us to reimagine the rope used for lynching as a rope to bind us all together (kinship).

P6 – My new learning about racism is that it is not enough to be a non-racist; you have to be an anti-racist. Essentially, this means we cannot be ignorant of the presence of racism in our society, even if we are not performing racist acts ourselves; rather, we must actively work against the institution of racism until everyone is truly equal. The video's demonstrated individuals' racist ideas, while the car theft showed individuals' as well as police officers' racism. In both cases (bike and car experiment of thefts), the black male faced the most intense speculation. America's original sin is white supremacy, which serves as the foundation for systematic oppression throughout the country. Chattel slavery…was perpetuated by Christianity, politics, and science. Atonement (At-One-Ment): How do we atone for our sins. The sins of America, according to Linda Radzik – Atonement – "To undergo some form of pain or sacrifice for wrongdoings. Luke10: 25-37 demonstrates the practice of conciliation. Atonement: descendants of enslaved peoples being made whole through education and real estate, having more opportunities to attend college and receive a degree, and allow for greater purchasing power of homes and homes in more affluent neighborhoods. Serious, credible efforts to help the African American population. Many reparation payments are political, Individual vs collective/holistic policies. Determining how much individual people who benefitted from slavery should atone for/repay (economic justice), should repay/atone for connecting (kinship) across differences to resolve the segregated church culture.

P7 – Rev. Rodney started me off on this path of Racial Atonement in 2019. I don't think that this project has changed much of my understanding or thoughts on racism because of the many discussions we have had and the books that I have read. The exception is my understanding of Atonement (not At-Onement). I had previously accepted Atonement to be interchangeable with At-one-ment. I am leaving with the belief that Atonement is God's work and At-one-ment is our objective as antiracists. Racism is a sin…both individual and communal…there has to be a way for sin to be covered and forgiven. Yes, Jesus provides the way. However, we are dealing with relationships between people, the same forgiveness needs to happen for the breach to be healed. Somewhere in this At-one-ment process, there has to be acceptance back into the right relationship (kinship), not only white people to Black people but acceptance back into relationships of white people by Black people. Having said this, I have been blessed by the relationships with Rev. Rodney and P5, who have made extra effort to bring me into friendship (kinship) and to guide me. I especially appreciate P3 and P4's participation and sacrifice to be in the group. While much of my belief and understanding has remained unchanged. I learned more history and have book recommendations for further reading. While the content of the At- one-ment process is invaluable, the most significant benefit is getting people together to build the community (kinship) that Rev. Rodney is seeking.

P8 – I was not looking forward to another thing to do. I was tempted to think I knew most of what I needed to know. I was wrong. I was reminded to embrace, once again, the power component of racism. Any of us can be prejudiced, but only those of us with societal and cultural power can truly practice racism. So, racism is a system of which I am a part, from which I benefit, simply because I am "white." The Robin DiAngelo (video) helped me to see something I had never seen before in the problem with the good-bad binary. It still feels a little strange not to label racism as evil automatically, but I admit that it does allow me to take a more honest look at myself and the part I play in the system. Racism, then, is the system to which we are all exposed, and of which whites, by definition, have benefited. It is a system that oppresses people of color and devalues anything other than whiteness, and it is omnipresent in our society. I cannot escape it. Reconciliation assumes 'conciliation' to begin with. It is the restoration of something broken.
Therefore, given that racism has always existed in some form, there has never been true "conciliation."
Reconciliation is not what we are after. This word only works if we take things back to God's original intentions. Atonement is making us one with God. "Racial Atonement" is making us one with one another, bringing healing to broken relationships, and wholeness to those who have been oppressed and injured by racism and white supremacy. Kin-domship, I stand by the simplicity of my initial answer here. However, I feel I have much more to learn about bringing a true Kin-domship into being in the here and now, and what part my actions have played—and may continue to play—in obstructing this process in the present. Finally, I was surprised by how meaningful my conversations (narrative theory) during this exercise were! It was lovely to hear the story of another and have someone hear my story, as well. I am embarrassed to say how much I did not want to engage at that point, but many of my prejudgments about the people I was paired with in the exercise proved incorrect. Listening to one another is one of the most helpful things we can do. Can it be that simple? Thank you for inviting me!

Conclusion

This project, "Racial Atonement as Prophetic Activism: Growing the Kindom of God Through Conciliation," is a caustic bridge to racial and generational healing. It is within me, in the words of the prophet Jeremiah, "Like a burning fire shut up in my

bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot."[12] When the LORD calls me home, I hope to leave this world in a better place than I lived, for our descendants to live in, and continue the work, benefitting from the healing initiated by this project. What more should someone be asked to do? The relationships that were established as I searched for participants and how the relationships grew during the project were phenomenal. I will cherish them for life.

Because of the Racial Atonement process, our church is now considering the removal of the European pictures of Jesus from their walls and stained glass windows, a significant step in our journey of "Racial Atonement." Another church, deeply moved by this, decided to have an interracial service of repentance. This powerful act acknowledged the evil deeds of their ancestors and set a clear path for leading their church to repentance. In addition, pastors who had never considered interfaith dialogues were not only open to them but also started hosting them quarterly. Their gatherings were interfaith, intergenerational, and interracial. These are just a few testimonials.

A caustic part of "Racial Atonement" includes economic repair for the harm and years of some of the worst violations against humanity in history: the genocide of Indigenous natives, the two hundred and sixty-plus years of chattel enslavement (free labor) that this country was built upon, and the one hundred plus years and counting of white supremacy terrorism on Black and Brown bodies that calls for restitution. A few white people have asked me how can we correct these wrongs? I respond that economics and recompense must happen for proper repair, demonstrating fruits of repentance. However, I learned through the project that there is a concern from our dear white sisters

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[12] Jeremiah 20:9 c and d.

and brothers who ask, what is enough, and when do Black people forgive the evil of their white ancestors? Our white brothers and sisters' concerns are legitimate and need some consideration. The "Racial Atonement" process offers that.

In closing, in the Greater Lafayette community, there was a time when white pastors had no relationships with Black pastors in that community. A white pastor said to me, "I did not know there were Black pastors in the community." Because of "Racial Atonement," the kinship of pastors and faith leaders has been positively impacted. Black and white pastors have promised to continue their fellowship since practicing conciliation through the experience of narrative theory, a vital part of the "Racial Atonement" process.

Finally, after the seven weeks of this project's encounter, my expectations were exceeded. The participants now have a deeper relationship with God because of their new experiences with each other. I also expect all participants to continue connecting through regular fellowships to heal the community's racial history of strife and intergenerational schism.

APPENDIX A

EVENT INVITATION

Event Invitation

The Racial At-One-Ment Experiential Learning culminates in an assessment identifying next steps for congregations to sustain inclusion and strengthen racial equity in their communities. We look forward to exploring with you how this invitation supports the equity work you and your congregations are already doing. We encourage you to partner with a church or churches/people of different ethnicities for the purpose of listening to diverse voices. The value in examining this rich experience is immense for racial healing in this communities. “For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26-28). To participate or if you have questions, contact: Rev. Rodney Lynch at (765) 421-2034 or lynchrodney42@gmail.com.

With faith, hope and love,

Rev. Rodney Lynch

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Investigator Name: Rodney J. Lynch

Contact Information: rjlynch1@united.edu/765-421-2034

Introduction: I am a doctoral student at United Theological Seminary.

Purpose: I am conducting a study on: Racial Atonement as Prophetic Activism: Building the Kin-dom of God through Conciliation.

Requirements for Participation: You have been invited to participate because I believe you want to make the Greater Lafayette community a less racist and more equitable community. And, due-to this community being so separated/segregated, you want to develop relationships with others not like yourself.

Procedures: If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in a six-week project designed to help you identify and understand your own racial biases and ethnic racist ideas. We will have six focus groups for ninety minutes virtually through Zoom. I will present and lead focus group activities and discussions.

Human Subject participation: All the participants must have consented to be in the study, and participants must be protected and treated fairly throughout the study. For example, women who are pregnant or may become pregnant during the study, must provide a doctor's note for their safety since they are considered a protected class (i.e., vulnerable population) by the federal law.

Risks: Identify all foreseeable risks and discomforts to the human participants. These may include physical, psychological, social, or economic discomfort, or inconvenience. If any risk comes up, we will have faith leaders with counseling experience present.

Benefits: Identify the benefits of your research to society and possibly the individual human participant. The healing of relationships across ethnic and generational bearers in the community and the body of Christ will benefit all participants. Walls of distrust, hostility, and animus toward the other will be diminished. Awareness of our racial biases. and, hopefully, a more equitable society, will begin, as a result of this project.

Voluntariness: Participation is voluntary and you may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. You can also stop participating at any time. Your decision to participate will have no impact on anything. If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please contact me directly in person, on the phone, or electronic communication. My contact information is at the top of this consent form. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time. There are no risks of withdrawing from participation.

Confidentiality: We will be careful to keep your information confidential, and we will ask you and all the focus group members to keep the discussion confidential as well. There is always a small risk of unwanted or accidental disclosure. The conversations and the focus groups will be recorded and transcribed only with your permission. Any notes, recordings, or transcriptions will be kept private. I will be the only one with access to your information. The files will be encrypted and password protected. You can decide whether you want your name used. I will be the only one using a recording device for my own note taking as I review each session. Participates will participate via Zoom.

Summary: If you have any questions about the research study, please contact me.

Signature: Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be mad if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

Signature of Person Agreeing:

Date Signed:

Participate in the Project/Study

APPENDIX C

PRE-SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Pre-Survey Questionnaire

Why did you decided to participate in this project?

What is your understanding/definition of these terms?

Sin (condition) and Sin (practice)

Atonement

Racism

Segregation

Reconciliation

Conciliation

Atonement

Kingdomship

Kin-domship

Fruit of Repentance

APPENDIX D

POST-SRVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Post-Survey Questionnaire

After going through the process of Racial Atonement, what is your new understanding of these terms?

Sin (condition) and Sin (practice)

Atonement

Racism

Segregation

Reconciliation

Conciliation

Atonement

Kingdomship

Kin-domship

Fruit of Repentance?

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